

CHILDREN AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

How children conceptualise identity:

A comparison of case studies from

Romania and England

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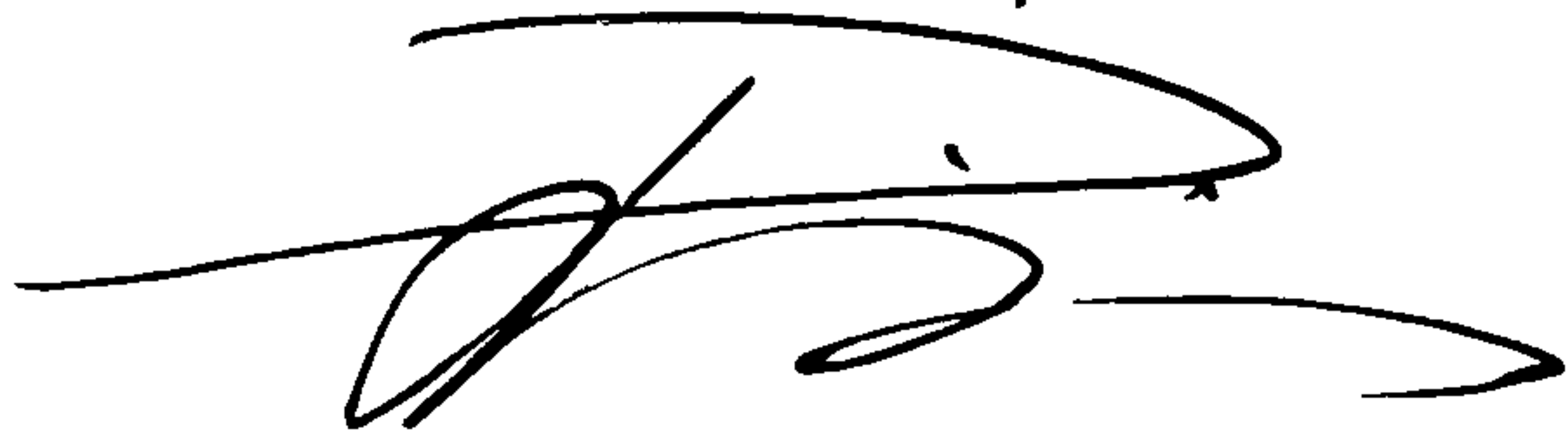
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Liviu Popoviciu

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UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
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COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE
SCIENCES

I certify that all material in this Thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material is included which has been submitted for any other award or qualification.

SIGNED *Liviu Popoviciu*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Liviu Popoviciu', written over a horizontal line.

DATE 27 June 2005

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CHILDREN AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

How children conceptualise national identity:

a comparison of case studies from Romania and England

The PhD critically examines the question of national identity in a comparative context, analysing case studies from the North West of Romania and the North East of England. It explores the interplay between diverse identities acted out within a range of spatial contexts, including: regional/national, urban/rural and West European/East European, but also within social and cultural dimensions.

Another aspect I investigated was the way educational policy is addressing issues of national identity in educational sites with reference to the inter-relationship between theoretical perspectives, from ethnic studies to post-colonialism, policies, including multiculturalism and antiracism and practice. Following this line of inquiry, I have become familiarised with various aspects of British policymaking processes public institutions. I have recognised the absence of similar policies and theoretical perspectives in Romania.

I conducted interviews with more than 100 children, within three schools (two in Romania and one in the North East of England). I used case studies as the main research method, carrying out semi-structured individual and group interviewing to collect data. The analysis of the data yielded a variety of information regarding the conceptualisation of national identity in the two countries, from which similarities and differences emerged. In both England and Romania, children imagine their national community in terms of tangible characteristics, such as language and territory. Only a limited number of students see their respective nation in essentialist or exclusivist terms. While the Romanian students had a rich and elaborate language to talk about national identity and exhibited high level of patriotism, the students from England had a limited vocabulary in talking about the same issue. In both cases, the 'other' was a significant factor in engendering a coherent identity: for the English students this was quite often represented in social terms, while for Romanian it was more focused on national and 'racial' differences.

In light of the above, the thesis wishes to inform the debate around the development of national identity in childhood and the teaching of Citizenship Education in both countries, advocating the need for an informed exploration of national identity as part of pluralist process of education informed by critical multiculturalism.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Research origins: Romania, (auto)biography and education

1.1. *Narrating the Romanian nation: deploying a cultural memory*

Novelists, playwrights, and poets appear to be better placed than social scientists to record the central significance of cultural memory for how we live our contemporary lives. They are particularly good at capturing the way cultural memory mediates a complex interweaving of individual (auto)biographies and wider social practices. My reflection on Romania's history of nation making makes explicit the act of remembering. Bhabha (1986: xxiii) maintains that: 'Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. It is such a memory of the history of race and racism, colonialism and the question of cultural identity, that Fanon reveals with greater profundity and poetry than any other writer'. Such a focus suggests the need to shift beyond the *historical facts* marked by rationality, objectivity and a search for 'the' truth, to questions of collective memory, fantasy, feeling, and anxiety. As early second wave feminism suggested, what we feel is as important as what we know, in terms of how we live our lives (Smith, 1987).

It is not simply academic representations of the research context that condition the generation of research data, but the interpretation and reflection of those carrying it out.

In other words, as suggested by feminist methodology, all researchers have a standpoint from which they produce knowledge (Harstock, 1983). Harding (1991) from her feminist standpoint epistemology suggests that researchers should make explicit their position in relation to the subject of inquiry. The story of my thesis begins with a reflective account of the impact of nationalism on the collective psyche of Romania (Boia, 2002a). It is within this context that I locate my own experiences, which form a major point of departure for the thesis. Growing up in a society that was heavily burdened by a great number and variety of social divisions made me equally acquiescing and rebelling against these divisions from a fairly early age. The deep origins of these divisions go back to centuries of accumulated historical events and accompanying traumas, as is the case in many other parts of the world. But in Eastern Europe and particularly in Romania and Hungary, there has been a chronic frequency with which in the last hundred years or so, divisions have surfaced and have been purposefully kept wide open (see Boia, 1997, 2002b; Culic et al., 1999; Gallagher, 1995). It is thus easy to understand that such divisions permeate every aspect of public and private life of every cognisant individual. Very few are able to live outside of these realities and even fewer can claim to have managed to protect themselves from its effects. Coping with the ensuing psychological stress is measured in how little damage is inflicted on one's personality, the success rate depending on the efficiency of available survival strategies.

Certain places on the map are more likely to be located on a major ethnic fault line at a specific time or during all of their known history (see Huntington, 1997). Eastern Europe

has several such areas and many have become quite notorious in the recent past: Bosnia, Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Cyprus figured in the news in the recent past due to the appearance of ethnic tensions between local communities and became in one way or another emblematic places in the mind of the public for the deep divisions that exist between the respective communities. Nevertheless, there are many other places that remained out of the news until now, either because the conflicts were not as bloody or as newsworthy as those from the former Yugoslavia. Vojvodina, Galicia, Transylvania, Transdnistria may appear in the media in the near future and, indeed, have come very close more than once (Huntington, 1997). Born into one of these regions, Transylvania, I developed a permanent anxiety, together with many of my compatriots, that at anytime this could become the next Bosnia or Kosovo. Transylvania has a chequered history at an ethnic level that goes back at least to the late Middle Ages, a history during which a lot of blood was shed – sadly, not by vampires (Hitchins, 1997).

Transylvania now belongs to Romania. In the past, for long periods it used to belong to Hungary, but it also had a few short-lived periods of independence, as well as having been incorporated into the Ottoman or Hapsburg Empires. The inheritance of this history is a patchwork of ethnic groups with opposing claims to political or cultural supremacy amongst themselves. With a tapestry of nationalities, including Romanians, Hungarians and Germans as the main ethnicities, and Gypsies, Jews, Armenians, Serbs as the smaller ethnic groups, Transylvania was a miniature of the regional landscape of Central and South Eastern Europe (Pierré-Caps, 1997). Religious identities were mainly

separate, following ethnic lines. But they sometimes coincided with them. For instance, a Romanian could be Orthodox or Catholic, but not a Protestant. While a Hungarian would be either Protestant or Catholic, but not Orthodox, a Romania Catholic could belong to a different branch of Catholicism than a Hungarian. But while Hungarians and Germans were equally Roman-Catholics, they had to be under the jurisdiction of different bishops. Hence, social divisions, fractures, and fault lines are pervasive, intersecting with each other in confusing patterns (Mungiu-Pippidi, 1999).

Historically, such divisions have been permanently manipulated by power-holders during the last century, with the same astuteness, irrespective of whether we are looking at Fascist governments during the Second World War, the ensuing Communist regimes or the supposedly liberal democracies currently in power (Diószegi and Süle, 1999). Alongside ethno-religious divisions, social and class differences and racial divisions were in operation. But the changing political regimes were constantly re-configuring the social divisions, thus adding to the already extreme confusion. The resulting pressure made society even more fragmented and life unpleasant and risky. Within Romania, there is a sense that nowhere is safe, not even within families where some formal or natural bonds might be expected to have bridged the social rifts. Attempts at inter-ethnic marriages have been crushed by a harsh reality where most citizens unwittingly re-enact the pervasiveness of the social divisions from the macrocosm of society to the microcosm of family life (Gagyi, 1996; Gereben, 1999). The unhappiness of the partners is only exceeded by the confusion and exclusion of the children of mixed marriages. In

such cases one needs to double one's effort and ingenuity to devise coping mechanisms in order to preserve one's mental health. Having had myself such an experience, I can testify to the difficulty of the task and still to this day I am not sure whether I am succeeding or not.

In concluding this section, I would add that an East European reading of recent sociological accounts that are in the ascendancy in Anglo-US academic representations highlights the remarkable ethno-centricism of western nation-states. Theorists of modernity have identified specific characteristics, such as such notions of fragmentation, dislocation, and risk within the context of west European societies, as marking a fundamental break with a shift from early capitalist society to late modernity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Another key claim is that de-traditionalisation has unsettled inherited patterns of relationships, thus calling into question notions of the self and identity. Hence, the emergence of what Giddens (1991) refers to as 'the reflexive project of the self', in which individual subjects are impelled to invent a self, a social identity and a wider community. In turn, these accounts are generalised across contemporary societies in response to the impact of the fragmentation of social relations attributed to globalising processes. As indicated above, East European societies, which are often represented in the West as pre-modern in relation to nation making, appear to have a longer history of being in a state of late modern conditions (see Huntington, 1997). In short, social science theorists, with their tendency to search out general patterns, need to pay special attention to holding onto the significance of the historically and

geographically specific. It is suggested here that the deployment of cultural memory may be productive. As Keith warns (1993, pp. 17-18) 'generalisations...by suppressing memory ... become the vehicles through which time is lost and places forgotten'.

1.2. Romanian education and the future of the nation

Social and cultural theorists have identified, both historically and in contemporary conditions, a range of institutions that have been central to the production of nationalism, including religion, education, the family, and the media (Smith, 1986; Colley, 1992; Bauman, 2002). From a Marxist position, the latter as part of the superstructure reflect the socio-economic interests of the ruling class (Hobsbawm, 1990). More recently post-structuralist and post-modern arguments, as part of a broader 'cultural turn' have been in the ascendancy within the academy, focusing upon the local, discursive production of contemporary national identities, marked by cultural differences, diverse representations and fragmentation (see Bauman, 1992). Within this context, in attempting to trace back the above deep-rooted instincts to a point where change might still be possible, I consider the Romanian education system as a central cultural space in which nationalism was and continues to be forged. Hence, I would argue that this might be the most suitable place where one could make a start in developing a different direction. This conviction was reinforced by reflecting on my own schooling experience, alongside my professional experience as a teacher and lecturer. During my education, I experienced a certain inconsistency from my parents

regarding the language in which it was delivered. My mother thought that it would be a good idea that I learnt Romanian from an early age, so she sent me to a Romanian language pre-school institute, a non-compulsory phase in the education system for children aged four to six. I remember that being a Hungarian native speaker with minimal knowledge of Romanian, I was just thrown in the middle of a group of children and expected to get on with things. Overall, I do not think it was a successful experience, as I retained a memory of permanently being on my own, not taking part in the group activities with the other children and not really having any friends. After that, I started primary school in a Hungarian speaking class, but which was in a mixed school. I had far more positive experiences here and my academic results were also excellent. However, paradoxically, it was here that I first had a glimpse of things to come, of the tension, the bullying and the separation between the Romanian and Hungarian students. As the majority of the students were Romanian, the resulting minority status of Hungarian students was reinforced by the sporadic bullying by some Romanian students, thus legitimising the ghettoisation of the minority.

At the age of 10, I started the secondary cycle and again my parents decided to send me to a different school, where the language of teaching was Romanian. The school was an exclusively Romanian language institution and I was at the time carrying a Hungarian name and surname. Probably these two factors did not help my integration, but still it would be hard to find an excuse for the systematic bullying from many of the students and from some of the teachers. My academic results were disastrous and after my

parents became involved in a conflict with the school authorities, it was decided that they would withdraw me from there and start the new year in a new school. Therefore, at 11, I continued the secondary cycle in a different school, with a different identity, having this time a Romanian name, reflecting also my new family reality as my mother had remarried a Romanian; thus, I was living now in a mixed family.

I started at 14 the first phase of high school at another exclusively Romanian language high school, where I was never suspected of being a pseudo-Romanian, as by this time I was speaking the language without any detectable Hungarian accent and I managed to build up a workable Romanian identity too. The insistence of my parents on directing me towards a Romanian language education was mostly motivated by the fact that higher education was almost exclusively available in Romanian, and there was an unofficial negative selection of Hungarian students at university level, reflecting the undeclared policy of the regime of discriminating in education and employment against non-Romanians. Interestingly, at 16, due to the randomness of the selection process, I ended up in a different institution to complete the second phase of the high school and this time again it was a mixed, Romanian and Hungarian school. Furthermore, I was in a class that was itself mixed, half the students being Romania and half Hungarian. The reason for this was that by that time, there was a *numerus clausus* for Hungarian students and the only way they could complete their education was through being disguised as Hungarian students in a Romanian class and being allowed to study certain subjects in their native language. Besides the Byzantine tortuousness of the education

system during those last years of the Ceaușescu regime, the constant and visible oppression of ethnic minorities placed an enormous strain on everyone's coping strategies when it came to dealing with the already existing divisions in society.

Reflecting on those years, the bullying of other students and teachers was not the only source of social division that we experienced. During the 12 years of compulsory schooling, the curriculum was heavily imbued with ideological values that materialised in the social and psychological divisions amongst the students. It was mainly through the teaching of humanities that nationalistic propaganda was disseminated, sometimes quite openly, often though in more subtle ways. The curriculum could thus operate for many teachers as an acceptable outlet for their own prejudice, which converged with the bias of the state-controlled media.

When I went to university, I decided to choose English and French as my main subjects, as it seemed a convenient way to avoid any more oscillating between Romanian and Hungarian. Also during the time I spent at university, Romania together with the rest of Eastern Europe experienced a regime change. After having lived through one of the most extreme political regimes in the Communist world, everybody was more than willing to embrace the idea of a liberal democracy as a more suitable form of society. Unfortunately, there was a strong resistance to liberalising all aspects of society and very soon, divisions, antagonisms, intolerance, and bigotry replaced the short-lived enthusiasm for the new era. Southeast Europe or the Balkans have experienced a much

more difficult transition to the new regime and in many countries, reactionary political and social forces actually aborted the whole process of the creation of an open society (see Marino, 1995, 1996, Todorova, 2000). In the case of the former Yugoslavia, this led to self-annihilation, while in Romania it meant a return to the well-known ethnic divisions and tensions. The relatively liberal environment of the university provided a safe haven for five years during which I was not so acutely aware of the resurfacing of the old social divisions.

After I finished my teacher training, I got my first teaching job in the same school where I used to be a primary school student. I relished the idea of going to teach in an ethnically mixed school, especially in a school I attended as a student. In addition, I was convinced that now as an adult, I would be able to face all the pressure of assuming an openly mixed identity and furthermore, to promote liberal values of tolerance and honesty with my students. After one year, I realised how naïve my assumptions were. Crossing the borders between the two communities within the school did not occur without impunity, as everybody seemed to regard me with suspicion and incomprehension. By this time, a certain amount of imported political correctness was instilled in many people working in education, so I was not received with open hostility. But from the suspicion of the other teachers to the confusion amongst the students, I did not have an easy entrance. Though it soon became clear that I could not overcome the hostility of the head of the school and also, I could not overcome my moral concerns about what I was supposed to inform students during class management hours, where I

was supposed to teach curriculum material that would resemble an initiative towards citizenship education. Also, the new textbooks that were produced under the ongoing curricular reform were continuing the same old propaganda that was in place when I was a student. After the end of the academic year, I hastily retreated to the safety of the university again, for a master's course and after that a lectureship.

However, I maintained my commitment towards a different reform of the education, as I believed that change could only happen at the level of a new generation, who are less influenced by the social divisiveness of decades of propaganda. The only avenue open for any action seemed to be civil society initiatives towards improving inter-ethnic relations, mainly those focusing on young people. Establishing contact between the different communities of young people in order to engage them in common tasks and open dialogue seemed to be a way forward and I became engaged in a number of projects that were concerned with such activities. Although it seemed discouraging that most of such groups were very small, under funded and regarded with suspicion, hence, their impact could only be limited and localised, I was interested in how such initiatives might be translated into the mainstream. In many ways, most support came usually from partner organisations from abroad, where there was considerable empirical and theoretical experience in creating and managing such initiatives. While working within such a group, I came across a group from England that was conducting an international youth exchange project in Transylvania and one member of that group was working at the time in the Education Department at Newcastle University.

This section resonates with Mills (1970, p. 12) who suggests that: ‘No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and the intersections within a society, has completed its intellectual journey’. This thesis represents such a journey through my educational biography. At this stage, the main aim of my research was to make a contribution to educational debate in Romania, as I was expecting that my study might carry more credibility being completed in a British university under a more objective and neutral academic scrutiny. I am still convinced that credible and authoritative research is needed in Romania, both to interrogate current practices and to implement change.

This amounted in fact to a political agenda advocating change and, as such, I believed at the time that research can be used in predictable fashion to trigger the desired policy effect. In many ways, I was familiar with the content and practices of schooling in Romania at that moment and in the recent past. This resulted in a bias that allowed me to ‘predict’ to a certain extent the results of the inquiry, as I was confident that the questions would result in a set of responses in line with the practices of the educational system, i.e. a predominance of nationalist content in discourses. In this line of expectations, the interview schedule was meant more to explore the *quantitative dimension* of the preponderance of nationalist views instead of trying to understand the *meanings* of the responses in a *qualitative* framework.

The same political motivation was going to motivate my research in the schools in England, as I wanted to use the results of this inquiry as the model to be upheld for the Romanian reform initiatives. In order to be able to do this, I had to develop a thorough and comprehensive understanding of how national identity is conceptualised by children who are brought up by an education system that does not place an undue emphasis on a bellicose form of national identity. Clearly, the exploration of meanings as well as content was from the start the guiding principles for the data collection, with equal importance allocated to both of them. This kind of understanding required a clearly delineated qualitative methodology, with an increased level of interaction between me as researcher and the research site and subjects.

2. Theoretical beginnings

During the first few months of my studentship in late 1999, I began to formulate my research concern: how education contributes to the development of national identity among children in Romania and the United Kingdom. This focus emerged out of a personal and professional concern that the educational system in Romania was following a misconceived plan in setting up mechanisms that would generate a national identity in the tradition of an early modernity, characterised by a concept of nation-building and empire-building (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991; Mac Laughlin, 2001). I considered such a dated practice as unsuitable to present-day realities in late modernity, which would result in the development of an aggressive, militant, or bellicose

nationalism reminiscent of the 19th century (Giddens, 1991). In contrast to this, I wished to uphold a model where the concept of national identity is encased in the multifaceted complexity of contemporary society, at ease with pluralities of ethnicity and (multi)culture. In short, I was repelled by the compulsory flag-waving, literally and metaphorically, currently practised in Romania, and fascinated by the well-known self-consciousness of the English in engaging in any flag-waving (Kumar, 2003).

Initially, I set out to examine how the idea of nation came into being and how it is perceived today in wider society and more specifically within the academy, before exploring how schools produce or reproduce such an idea for pupils during the educational process. Schools are part of a mechanism that reproduces more than culture; they implement policies, which are at times the outcome of debates that have little to do with educational priorities (Woodward, 2000). This is especially so in societies whose governments might be classified as nationalist. In such cases, education is assigned an important role in the process of 'imagining' a nation (Anderson, 1994, p. 6) and sometimes of re-imagining a nation, as in Eastern-Europe societies, which after fifty years of suspended identity have to recover their 'lost' or 'corrupted' national identity, which has been submerged in the unifying internationalism of the communist block (Verdery, 1991). Nationalists claim that the members of a nation 'can reach freedom and fulfilment only by cultivating the peculiar identity of their own nation and by sinking their person in the greater whole of the nation' (Kedourie, 1996, p. 67), and for them the best way of attaining this is through education. But even in other parts of Europe, which

are not consistently haunted by nationalism, where nationalism has declined to banal practices of daily routines (Billig, 1995), long-ignored national agendas are being rediscovered and national projects are put into practice, for the greater good of members of such communities that are yet to be imagined in more tangible terms. A slow and unspectacular process is going on at the other end of Europe, shrouded in the fashionable slogan of devolution, but which shows similar features of the re-constructed national identity (Grosvenor, 1999). Once again, the school is often at the centre of the debate, as the most versatile tool of 'imagining' or re-imagining a community. As there is little, if any, impartial theorisation about national identity formation in Eastern Europe, it seemed necessary first to become familiar with Western theoretical frameworks in this field of inquiry. In turn, following this, to see if it were possible to extrapolate relevant findings to the realities of contemporary Eastern Europe.

There is no such concept as National(ist) Education formally operating in Romania in terms of a curriculum subject taught each week. Although one of the mission statements of schools is to produce good citizens that are responsible and well informed, it is difficult to know how this can be assessed. At times, it seems to many Romanians that such a condition of being 'good' at being national can only be evaluated through the media when reporting about another bloody ethnic conflict somewhere in the world. It is not easy to differentiate between the acceptability of adjectives such as patriotic, national, and nationalist in the context of education and any such distinctions are highly politicised. Though an educational policy might be the result of a short-term political

agenda, its consequences can make a dramatic impact on pupils' lives. Winning votes with a nationalist discourse is a frequent and too easily dismissed practice in many societies, but such nationalist agendas are often maintained after the campaigning has stopped. One of the most popular and visible ways of implementing such policies is in and through education. The electioneering discourse deploying notions of patriotism, loyalty, a unique culture, the honour and privilege of sharing this culture, pride and duty of belonging to a nation, soon finds its way into the classroom (Mac Laughlin, 2001). Teachers themselves are active participants in this process and as products of the same system they continue to perpetuate the type of vision that seems 'patriotic', as was observed in a recent study by Davies et al. (2004). This operates through the official or hidden curriculum, involving a wide range of practices, such as lining up pupils in front of the national flag or just being imbued with the beauty of a 'typical' landscape of a serene sunlit village lanes from a glossy picture in a textbook (Kedourie, 1996). Although from a late modernity stance this seems to be a contemporary practice in many societies, it is a process that can be traced back to the 19th century, as Grosvenor (1999) states:

National identity can be similarly conceived as 'imagined'; it provides an 'imaginary unity' against other possible unities. The development of the public sector in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century provided a mechanism whereby the state could foster 'communion' and 'comradeship'. The modern classroom was invented, together with a teacher, furniture, texts and aids, to produce a designed effect: the separation, segmentation and segregation of childhood and the inculcation of common values and virtues.' (p. 247)

Thus, my inquiry was originally intended to look at the whole ethos of the school, but paying attention to particular subject areas and school rituals. I thought it would be more productive to look at how geography, history, literature, religious education, and citizenship are taught and also to look at the ways schools practise rituals of collective and national belonging.

However, it quickly became clear that the simplified conceptual dualism which I was deploying, represented by a highly negative model of Romanian ethno-nationalism in contrast to a positive model of English nationalism, did not hold true (Mac Laughlin, 1998). As a result of my early reading of the literature and initial carrying out of empirical work, I found that the situation in the United Kingdom was more complex, at conceptual, political and epistemological levels. Hence, the UK experience was far from constituting a textbook model on how to create an inclusive and pluralistic national identity. Conceptually, I came to see how a diverse range of social categories including race and culture, alongside class and gender, play a crucial role in constructing pupils' identities in the British education system. This complexity had serious implications for my comparative analysis, as contemporary Romania is a relatively homogeneous society. After 50 years of Socialism and its forced levelling, there are few class differences, in terms of socio-economic status differentials and consumer-based lifestyles, while gender equality at the level of the state appears to have been more successful than in the UK. At the same time, race has been officially erased, for example, by the state policy of denial of the existence of the Roma minority, although this is

currently changing. Most significantly, it became quite clear to me that it is not possible, as I had assumed, to isolate national identity as a distinct phenomenon unrelated to processes of globalisation, migration, European integration, *et cetera*. The United Kingdom operating within late-modernity conditions has had a more profound and intense exposure to these phenomena (Brah et al., 1999a). Hence, I began to rethink my thesis in terms of how the UK's attempted solutions to solving the ensuing issues might become a source for helping to reform curriculum policy in Romania, and how that would incorporate a modernised mode of citizenship underpinned by a critical multiculturalism (May, 1999).

Consequently, I began to rethink my thesis in terms of how the UK's attempted solutions to solving the ensuing issues might become a source for helping to reform curriculum policy in Romania, that would incorporate a modernised mode of citizenship underpinned by a critical multi-culturalism (May, 1999). Most importantly, this brought me back to explicitly engage with critical theory and its promise to open up research, in a move away from a positivist search for universal truths to be applied in diverse national contexts, with which I began my study, to a need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the conceptual and political importance of the impact of historical contexts, social meanings and diverse knowledges in which individual and collective subjects make sense of questions of national identity and how we live with difference. The last two sentences appear to contain a contradiction, making a claim to wish to use the experiences of one society to reform another society's education system

and wider civil society, while at the same time stressing the historical, cultural and political specificity of each (local) national space. Indeed this is a major tension for contemporary social and cultural theory, such as post-structuralism and post-colonialism, that as a Romanian from a more traditional intellectual milieu, I have found it difficult to come to terms with. In other words, my research methodology has contributed to the next stage of my academic journey, as is further explored below.

A further complexity arose, however, from the recent shifting of political and theoretical perspectives within the traditional left in the UK, as established positions are being questioned and reconfigured. Existing accounts of multiculturalism involving integration/assimilation-based models based on English or British national identity have come under increased scrutiny. For example, Trevor Phillips, head of the CRE suggested recently that 'multiculturalism suggests separateness' (2004) and that a common culture could create the missing bond between various disaffected segments of society and mainstream Britishness. In addition, recent international events have intensified the debate about migration, diversity, cultural pluralism, and social cohesion. So far, suggested solutions seemed to have developed from the panoply of the right, with an emphasis on traditional views of nationhood, mono-culturalism and social solidarity (Goodhart, 2004). However, the former British Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has recently suggested that there is a need to 'reclaim the patriotic mantle from the right and forge a new English identity for the modern age' (Ashley and White, 2005). He warns that 'there is a real danger that if we simply neglect or talk down

national identity – people’s sense of common belonging and shared values – we risk creating a festering, resentful, national identity, an identity based not on confidence, but on grievance’ (ibid.). Within this context, according to Crick (2004), there is a need to develop a more coherent and confident version of Englishness, that is as equally assertive as the Scottish or Welsh identity. However, these suggestions of the need to re-configure notions of national belonging do not go unchallenged. A range of commentators, including Modood (2004), Cesarini (2004), and Bunting (2005), all emphasise the dangers of suggesting a new assimilationism based on a culture that is neither shared by many nor has the necessary coherence to resist contestation. This debate is further complicated by the ongoing British lack of consensus on the need for European integration, pushed to the fore by the need to approve the new EU Constitution in a referendum.

Exploring the above issues within the context of education led me to research children’s perspectives at a point when they are old enough to articulate abstract concepts, but not too old to be socialised into self-censorship around controversial issues. I argue in this thesis that there is an urgent need to grant higher epistemological status to children in producing knowledge *about* and *for* education policy and practice. In many cases, across the UK and East European societies, policy and practice is not grounded in pupils’ perspectives. As Nieto (2004) points out,

Students are the people most affected by school policies and practices, but they tend to be the least consulted about them. Consequently, they are ordinarily the

silent recipients of schooling. Indeed, it has been pointed out that their role as passive beneficiaries of educational reforms is in direct contrast to the widely accepted constructivist expectations for their learning (Corbett and Wilson, 1995). Even when students are not silent, as when they resist and challenge the education they receive, their advice is ordinarily neither sought nor heeded. (p. 179)

The privileging of pupils' epistemological position raised a further complexity for my comparative study. The Romanian children tended to have an excess of vocabulary to discuss issues of nationalism and national identity but little access to critical discourses to begin to open up the concept of national belonging. In contrast, the children from the North East of England tended to combine a non-racist stance, suggesting an understanding of living in a multi-cultural society, with a lack of vocabulary to discuss issues of national identity beyond notions of racialisation.

There are few UK studies about how children conceptualise national identity compared to the great number of texts addressing children's identity in terms of other categories, including race, gender, sexuality, and disability (Mac an Ghail, 1988; Morris, 1991; Skelton, 2001; Connolly, 2004). In some recent studies, selected aspects of ethnic majority national identity are extrapolated, such as whiteness (see Nayak, 1999) but they tend to be researched as an autonomous entity. Cullinford (2000) has produced a substantial study of mainly white schoolchildren in which he writes of the danger of developing a national identity based on prejudice and exclusivist practices. However, as Carrington and Short (1995) suggest,

Relatively little is known about children's construction of national identity and how they develop. [...] Teachers need to have some idea about how children construe their national identity if exclusivist and ethnocentric assumptions about citizenship are to be deconstructed. (p. 1)

It is in relation to this paucity of material, that I present children's accounts of their understanding of national identity. However, there are certain limitations in making claims about reporting on the authentic voices of young people. As Connolly (1997) argues:

No research account of young children can ever claim to be *the* true and definitive account. Rather, they are all inevitably products of the researcher's own values and assumptions and the influences they have brought to bear through their role in the research process. (p. 163)

Textbooks on methods maintain that it is essential to practice methodological reflexivity without indicating the necessary conditions and techniques to carry this out (Walker, 1985). I found that engaging with the conceptual, political, and epistemological issues discussed above enabled me critically to rethink my research focus. In turn, this led to developing a number of coherent questions and possible lines of inquiry that would eventually lead to the formulation of a valid research question.

3. Research questions

Initially, the central research question was how education contributes to the development of national identity in Romania and the United Kingdom. This also

included an inquiry exploring how children conceptualise national belonging. Thus, the main focus of enquiry was going to be on how schools contribute to the development of children's national identity as future citizens of their country. As Carrington and Short, (1996, p. 203) maintain: 'Compared to the literature on children's racial and ethnic identities, relatively little is known about their understanding of national identity. Such knowledge is necessary if schools are to challenge racism, xenophobia and ethnocentrism effectively'. So my enquiry, at an earlier stage, sought to examine the education process by going beyond a narrow focus on multi-cultural versus anti-racist policy debates about race and racism, and identifying those aspects which could be related to a contemporary understanding of nationalism among children.

Alongside the complexities discussed above, a further issue arose in relation to my original intention to examine the processes in operation in schools in a comparative study undertaken in Romania and the United Kingdom. The rationale for the choice of these societies is that in both societies there is a process of repositioning of what constitutes national identities. Though these societies have marked differences, I was working with a conventional assumption that the re-imagining of national communities is accomplished in ways that might suggest a shared pattern, especially in the case of educational policies under the impact of recent global changes (Mac Laughlin, 2001; Kumar, 2003). As the research developed, however, the meaning of the differences between the two societies became clearer. Romania may be represented as a bystander of the ethnic turmoil of the Balkans, but nevertheless exhibits most of the symptoms that

caused the tragedy of its neighbours, while recently attempting to catch up with the modernising, European integration processes that seemed to have left behind Romania over the last few decades. In contrast, the United Kingdom is undergoing a complex process of constitutional reform, with English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish devolution, and a strong reinforcement of regional identities (Brah et al., 1999b). In both societies there is an ongoing process of reform in education, accompanied by a high-profile political debate, within the political arena and the teaching profession. But major differences lie in each society's assumptions and expected outcomes that permeate civil society. In Romania, social differences and divisions in relation to ethno-nationalism are ideologically and discursively naturalised, so that the purpose of the educational system is not to challenge but rather to reproduce and celebrate authoritarian forms of social order (Mac Laughlin, 1998).

In direct contrast, the purpose of the educational process in the United Kingdom can be read to be the opposite of this ideological and discursive work that is in operation in Romania. For example, there are significant recent policy developments within the UK, with the publication of the Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship (September 1998) entitled *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*. Also, the recent recommendation of the government advisory group is that education for citizenship should 'be a statutory requirement in the curriculum' (QCA, 1998, p. 4). Education for citizenship, it seems, will eventually provide the philosophical underpinning for New Labour's policy on the school curriculum. For a further

discussion of more recent developments, see the section Making sense of citizenship in the literature review chapter.

In Romania, there is still a heated debate about the first comprehensive and coherent post-communist educational reform. Also, there are different, though pervasive, discourses about European integration and the need of repositioning or reaffirming national identity in a more integrated Europe. Education also has the task of responding to the challenges of multicultural societies, as both societies have significant visible minorities, alongside social majorities who are questioning the latter's position (Bonnett, 2000b; Baggini, 2005, p. 5). Currently, in Romania there is no coherent initiative to address any of these issues at a national level. One could speculate that this is due to the fact that, on the one hand, the government is not able or willing to conceive and implement a modern and liberal educational programme concerning ethnicity, multiculturalism and citizenship. While, on the other hand, it shies away from passing into legislation existing practices, as this would be highly controversial in the current context when the country is monitored by Brussels for the necessary reforms in order to achieve EU integration.

Working within the specific conditions of contemporary geopolitics, I set out critically to examine the state of play of the teaching of Citizenship in schools in the UK, mainly through teaching materials and critical debates that have emerged since it became an active element of the National Curriculum. I wished to focus on issues related to

concepts about national identity and how this is related to the way children conceptualise ideas about national belonging. A further aspect of the inquiry critically explores how children conceptualise the nation, involving the processes of *belonging to* and *exclusion from* the national group. National belonging can be seen largely as an extended version of group belonging, and for a more comprehensive understanding attention needs to be paid to specific group processes, such as prejudice (psychological level) and social and cultural exclusion (sociological level), that inform the formation of nationalism. Cullingford (2000) has conducted one of the few studies into schooling where the inquiry is built upon analysing group relations and development of prejudice in the context of nationhood.

At this stage, having worked through a wide range of literature in the field of inquiry, I constructed the empirical section of the research in an attempt to capture children's conceptualisation of national identity. The interviews focused on children's accounts, at the age of 10 and 11, of such concepts as nation, difference, culture, race, ethnicity, and exclusion. I wanted to know what do they understand when they use these concepts and how do they use them. Talking to children of this age about concepts that most of us take for granted – country, language, 'foreigners', race – hopefully would challenge the perspective dominant in Romania that these are necessarily naturally occurring phenomena. At the same time, the empirical work might provide evidence that children are open and unbridled with the fixities that the concepts acquire at a later age.

As suggested above, educational policy in this area is rarely informed by research conducted with children, which places their experience, knowledge, and understanding at the centre of the educational process. By critically exploring how schools approach policy questions around national identity and how children conceptualise national identity, I hoped that it would become visible if there is a constructive interplay between the two. I argue in this thesis that educational policy initiatives need to be informed by the reality of pupils' thinking, so I attempted to examine to what extent there is currently a meeting of school policy and pupil thinking in the field of citizenship education. I must point out, however, that when I began this thesis, citizenship was not yet an active part of the National Curriculum; it was taught for the first time after the academic year during which I collected my data. But a significant number of teaching materials have been published since and I have used these to examine whether there was a convergence between these new materials and my findings about children's conceptualisation of national identity.

While aware of the geographies and histories of difference between societies, one outcome of the research has been a suggestion on how the Romanian school system might learn from the British system in terms of its curriculum development in relation to national identity (Massey, 1994). These lines of inquiry have continually evolved and shifted due to my realisation, as outlined above, that such a simple dichotomy as 'Romania – bad / UK – good' with respect to national identity was naïve and unproductive. Such a comparison assumed a fixed and homogenous understanding of

national identity within the respective societies, which is far from being the case, at least in the UK (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993). This was followed by a further limiting assumption that the single category of national identity would be sufficient to make sense of young people's emerging conception of citizenship. The research question should ideally be sufficiently open to accommodate the above concerns and still reflect the initial focus on national identity. So the central question: **How do children conceptualise national identity?** is the main focus of this thesis. It critically examines, within a comparative context, the different knowledges, experiences, and understandings of Romanian and English children. It is intended to encompass a wider range of national identity positions expressed across the boundaries of various spatial contexts (such as regional / national / urban / rural / West European / East European), and accompanying social and cultural dimensions.

To contextualise the research within current educational practices, the thesis additionally investigates the way that educational policy is addressing issues of national identity in educational sites with reference to the inter-relationship between theoretical perspectives, from ethnic studies to post-colonialism, policy implementation, including multiculturalism and school practice. The site for this exploration is located mainly at the level of Citizenship Education, as it permits some level of functional comparison in terms of practice and recommendations for policy transfer. The literature survey, the methodological concerns, and the empirical work, were informed by the research

question and they reflexively engage with the research question, its evolution and its limitations within conditions of late modernity (Lather, 1991; Giddens, 1991).

4. Structure of the thesis

4.1. Literature survey

The literature survey helped to create theoretical frameworks for the thesis and shifted the inquiry towards areas of theoretical explorations that were highly productive in addressing the research question. The development of this chapter follows a chronological and organic evolution of my readings during the research process, from initial assumptions to focused explorations in the field.

My initial idea was to try to map the field of political studies engaged with the idea of nation, nationalism, and national identity. The area seemed extremely novel and fascinating to me, as I was not familiar with any of these theories, and at the time they would have been largely unknown back in Romania. These theories uncovered the artificial, constructed, and contextual nature of nationhood as opposed to a taken-for-granted, natural, and historical evolution of the nation. However, this line of inquiry failed to address the question of how the process of 'imagining' the nation takes place in schools and what is the impact of official policies in this regard.

While reviewing literature on schooling and identity formation in Britain, I became aware of the great expanse of work on questions of race. In order to understand this salient preoccupation with colour racism, I had to familiarise myself with the major explanations of race and racism, in historical and contemporary perspectives. This direction led organically to the next field of inquiry, notably the initiatives and policies developed by progressive movements in combating racism and discrimination. Multiculturalism and, to a certain extent, anti-racism became the obvious subjects of further investigation as they theoretically underpinned the most coherent and effective educational policies in the field. I focused on multiculturalism, and specifically on critical multiculturalism as it seemed to be an appropriate framework for my comparative study within conditions of late modernity. The next step was to look at new developments in education that were most likely to address the issues of identity, national or otherwise. The recent statutory introduction of Citizenship Education, first, in England, and later in Romania, seemed a potentially productive place to try to uncover the type of national identity, if any, being forged by the respective educational policies.

The final section of the literature review explores a number of studies that have researched children's conceptualisation of identity with reference to race, nation, and culture. Also, I attempted to identify policy initiatives that seemed appropriate in developing an inclusive, open and multi-layered national identity in tune with the complexities of globally-based late modern conditions.

4.2. *Methodology*

This chapter outlines the main methodological concerns that I explored during the research process, as well as the research methods deployed in collecting and analysing the data. After contemplating ethnography as a possible choice, I decided that using case study as a method would be more suitable for the scope of this enquiry, obtaining the data collection through semi-structured interviews.

The methodology is located in the tradition of critical perspective (Lather, 1991). Making a distinction between the 'making' and 'taking' of research questions, I outline how I arrived at my current research problem: Romanian and English children's conceptualisation of national identity. I shifted to a hybrid position, in which operating within an overall (philosophically based) methodological paradigm, with its emphasis on cultural context, meanings, and understandings, I found it useful to deploy both qualitative and quantitative methods (techniques). This enabled me to develop a productive tension in carrying out empirical research: of combining the inferring of meanings by understanding the context with specific quantitative strengths.

Central to this development was coming to understand the productivity of recognising the relative autonomy of methodology from theoretical and substantive issues. More specifically, I was directed towards the epistemological status of the interviewed children's perspectives, which raised a number of complexities for my comparative study, emphasising the significant differences between the two nationally based

samples. These included: the differential access to a vocabulary to talk about national identity, and an increasing awareness on my part that *national identity*, as a single category, was not sufficient to capture the children's sense of their 'national selves' but rather involved interconnecting identity positions, spoken through language, regionalism, gender, and consumerism. A further major difference, with methodological implications for a comparative study, was in relation to policy development around issues of national identity, cultural difference, and modern citizenship. In England, discussion of national identity is relatively limited compared to the wide range of materials about national identity available in Romania.

The chapter details the advantages and limitations of both case study and semi-structured interviewing. There is a discussion about specific issues relating to the usage of case studies for generating knowledge through generalisations beyond the scope of the cases under observation. Following this, the chapter explains the specific problems of a comparative research methodology and the general ethical considerations underpinning research with children. Finally, the last section suggests a method of analysis of the data obtained from the interviews.

4.3. Data analysis and results

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the data collection process and of the data itself. It follows the two separate data collection processes in Romania and in England, respectively, looking at the details of the process such as negotiating access to

the sites of the research, description of the sites, setting up the interviewing, and specific ethical issues. It also presents the interview schedules used and how the interviewing process itself took place. In each section, there is also a continuous reflexive dimension, as I engage critically with the specificities of each society and the limitations I encountered in attempting to compare the two societies, and their possible impact on the quality and validity of the data. For example, a major issue I needed to resolve was the question of the inter-relationship between data collection, language, and national contexts.

There are two major sections in which the data collected is presented within a discourse analysis which first attempts to identify the themes that are capable of shedding light on the concepts deployed by children in making sense of nation. Then it attempts to illuminate the range of children's responses to national identity formation from those who perceived identity in an exclusivist and essentialist manner to those who inhabited a pluralistic and inclusive style.

4.4. Conclusion

The concluding chapter attempts to bring together the findings from the two previous sections dealing with the analysis and present them in a comparative context. It attempts to make recommendations towards furthering the debate about children's conceptualisation of national identity, as well as the development of educational policies that are informed by research granting high epistemological status to children's

knowledges, experiences, and understandings. It also considers reflexively the entire research process conducted for this thesis and establishes possible future directions of inquiry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to illustrate and support the theoretical explorations encountered during the research process. The structure of the chapter follows the line of inquiry of the research project and critically engages both with the literature as well as with the suitability of the respective fields to the present research project. The initial emphasis of the research question was the impact of schooling on the formation of national identity. I considered that for a thesis that explores the question of how children conceptualise national identity, it was imperative to include a detailed mapping of the field around theories relating to the idea of nation. The section 'Making sense of 'nation' reviews major theories about the formation of the nation and the nature of nationalism, while setting out to evaluate the usability of these frameworks in the comparative context of this thesis. It became apparent after attempting to place into context the results of my reading of the literature that it was relatively easy to locate the empirical research carried out in Romania in the paradigm of 'nation' theories as current debates are centred on the national(istic) opposition between the belated nation-making agenda of the Romanian majority and a national resurgence and recuperation of the Hungarian minority. It soon emerged, however, that the empirical research carried out in Britain did not fit comfortably into the same framework. Consequently, exploring the concepts

of nation, nationality, and nationalism in relation to education would have serious limitations, as the questions of identity and culture appeared to be analysed and described in relation to race, racism, and multiculturalism.

The section 'Making sense of race' follows as a result of this. I had to search elsewhere in order to find an equally dominant discourse about identity and wider social and historical relations that in Romania would be subsumed to 'nation'. The predominance of debates about 'race' in Britain seemed to fulfil a similar function. Here, I set out to attempt to understand the context and history of the debate about race, and its function and limitations in a contemporary setting of a predominantly white city such as Newcastle. This line of inquiry led to the need to examine the strategies adopted in the United Kingdom for dealing with the issues created by the complexities of a diverse society increasingly aware of living with difference. I was particularly interested in understanding the initiatives adopted by educators to achieve a pluralist and inclusive discourse in schooling. Anti-racism, multiculturalism, and critical multiculturalism seemed to offer a framework for an education system informed by such principles. However, the problem for my research project was that currently Romania lacks a comparative theoretical or political discourse. For the sake of consistency in operating within a comparative methodology, the critique has to be made *in abstentia*.

The section 'Making sense of Citizenship' looks at the state of play in this contemporary setting. Recently there have been a series of important evolutions, largely in the political

field, that are attempting to reposition some of the main signposts within the debate around 'nation' and 'race'. This section, 'Making sense of citizenship', looks at the current state of the debate and attempts to locate the changes in relation to the previous paradigms. It also attempts to look at what occurred after the introduction of the compulsory Citizenship Education in secondary schools and, especially if in this context 'nation' is considered a relevant topic and, what constitutes its content and how it is taught. In other words, there is an attempt to capture the processes of translating policies into classroom practices. The last section looks at a number of studies that have attempted to understand the development of national identity, and the ensuing prejudice in children within schooling, and the role played by the educational system, especially in relation to the curriculum. It will pay specific attention to a number of empirical studies and theoretical explorations that directly deal with the development of national identity in children and the educational policies underpinning such developments.

2. Making sense of 'nation'

In this section I attempt to explain why I thought that it was necessary to review the body of theory on 'nation' and how these theories relate to the scope and context of my inquiry. I engage with a number of landmark theories in the field, such as the work of Gellner, Anderson, A. D. Smith, and Billig, identifying in what ways these are productive or not to my research project. I do this, bearing in mind, the research is

carried out in a comparative context between the United Kingdom and Romania, with regard to the manner in which these theories articulate the differences between the two societies.

As a first step in approaching the literature review, it seemed necessary to try to encompass theories about 'nation' and its lexicological offshoots, for example, nationalism, nationhood, nation-state, *et cetera*. It seemed necessary to locate my research within a theoretical framework that enables the emergence of a consistent and coherent analysis and explanation of the empirical data under observation. This assumption, however, came to be seen as misguided for three reasons. Firstly, the overwhelming size of the literature accumulated on 'nation' makes it impossible to review the entire body of theory and then make an informed choice of one framework. Secondly, related to this point, none of the main theoretical explorations offers a satisfactory multifaceted explanation of the complex reality of the 'nation'. Thirdly, linked to this point, there was a need to be able to use such a theory on two radically different manifestations of the 'nation' phenomenon, notably the case of Romania and the case of the United Kingdom. No theoretical framework, however universal, is able to accommodate the contradictions and incongruities that appear if used consistently in explaining what is going on in both of these societies. I concluded that grounding the research in a single theory, or on a unified grand theory, was neither productive nor feasible: the scope of this thesis is different and there are major difficulties in analysing two societies using the same references. Hence, a new strategy was required and I

decided it would be useful if I briefly reviewed a number of major theories in the field and then attempted to understand the Romanian and British context within a more general frame.

I began by examining how the concept of nation is defined and a search for its origins. This might lead to clarifying other concepts such as nation-state, nationhood, national identity and nation-building. Alongside this, I needed to explore the concept of nationalism, and in this context, other related concepts such as civic-nationalism, and ethnic and national minorities. The two major conflicting approaches on nationalism, primordialist and modernist or constructivist, as defined by Gellner (1997) operate as a dividing line between East European and West European conceptions of nation and nationalism. Briefly, the primordialist view states that nations have natural and ancient origins, while a modernist position emphasises that nations were artificially created during a period that is called modernity (*ibid.*, p. 13). It is easy to identify an overwhelming nationalist position with the first stance, while the second is the acknowledged explanation in contemporary West European academic circles, being relatively unknown in Eastern Europe.

During the literature review, a number of theoretical frameworks emerged that I found productive for my research. For example, Ernst Gellner (1983) links the development of the nation to modernisation in general and industrialisation in particular. According to Gellner, modernisation is a complex and interrelated set of social changes that transform

agrarian societies and their simple patterns of hierarchy and religious integration into complex industrial, secular societies manifest in large-scale bureaucratic states with complex and changing patterns of hierarchy and integration. Thus, there is a need for the development of a common culture and language as a shared medium of communication for the effective functioning of the society and its economy. According to this view:

Such complex and potentially fragmentary societies require above all shared ideas and meanings that link people together into a common project. All of this requires the mass education of the population. As a consequence, any state that is undergoing modernisation or wants to initiate modernisation and develop massive bureaucratic systems must create a homogenising, centrally determined mass education system which effectively imposes a single language and a single culture from above. Minority, folk and peripheral languages or cultures are effectively squeezed out of the system or are actively quashed to create a single mass national culture (Guibernau and Goldblatt, 2000, p. 126)

Hence, the emergence of the nation is seen as a modern invention and not as a natural phenomenon based on ancient communities of blood or culture. Regarding the usage of this theory in the context of the present study within its comparative context, I found it difficult to account for the differences in the historical evolution of Great Britain and Eastern Europe. Industrialisation was a long and coherent process in the UK, while in Romania and Hungary it is debatable whether one can talk about industrialisation and, in the best of case, it would be late, short-lived and patchy. This fact and also the

existence at present of a virulent and quasi-generalised nationalistic discourse in Romania and Hungary, demands a different explanation.

Benedict Anderson (1994) in his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, locates the origins of nations in the process of modernisation, but in a more subtle way, resulting from a complex interplay between literacy, incipient modernity, and international politics. For him, the nation is an imagined community, which he explains in the following terms.

Because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them]...]. The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. Nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind [...]. It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm... nations dream of being free... it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequity and exploitation that may prevail [...] the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.

(ibid., 1994, pp 15-16)

Nations imagine themselves as self-ruling, sovereign nation-states. They spring from the emergence of new communication media and modern transport infrastructures. Alongside these developments, there is a shared language and culture across classes in order to engender the modern nation in marked opposition to other similar nations lying at its borders undergoing the same processes. Anderson sees the cultural roots of the nation in the failure of some fundamental cultural conceptions, that is, the idea that a

particular script-language offers privileged access to ontological truth, being part of that truth. This also leads to the failure of the great transcontinental sodalities of Christendom or Islam; the belief that society was naturally organised around and under high centres who ruled by some form of cosmological dispensation - the divine right of monarchs.

Anderson's theory can be seen as related to Gellner's position regarding the link between the emergence of the idea of nation and the industrial/capitalist development of societies, but it does not place the same emphasis on the agency of the state. Print-capitalism, unified administration, conscription armies, mass education, as well as conscious nation-building efforts of a rebellious intelligentsia, consolidated the idea of the nation state during the 19th century. But again, the emergence of print-capitalism in Eastern Europe was late and modernity seems sometimes still a distant goal rather than a historical reality. It might be possible to speculate that national self-awareness appeared in pre-modern times, without capitalism as a necessary catalyst.

A further theory developed by Anthony D. Smith (1986, 1996) argues that contemporary nations have to be based on some pre-existing communities. These communities are themselves based on language and/or culture and/or religion, or in other words, an ethnic community, defined as a loosely bound group of people whose shared identity is related to culture, history, and/or language, but whose relationship to territory and statehood is more indeterminate than a nation (Guibernau and Goldblatt 2000). A nation

emerges from an ethnic community when it is in possession of an historic territory or homeland, when it possesses a common heritage of myths and historical memories that later come to form a common mass culture. All these elements co-exist within the framework of a common system of legal rights and responsibilities within a common economy. Smith's theory is more suitable in explaining the state of the 'nation' in Eastern Europe, where much emphasis is put on common ethnic features. Although Smith, too, accepts the role of industrialisation and in general of modernity in the formation of the nation, in also emphasising the 'natural' element his framework is more amenable to be deployed in the East European context. The idea of ethnicity, however, is more problematic. In the UK, and more generally in a West European context, ethnicity and nation can be treated separately as explained above. In Eastern Europe, ethnicity and nation are one and the same and are largely based on a shared language. Culture, territory, and nationhood are all functions of a common language. This is not the case in the UK, where culture and history are the determining factors in the interplay between the concepts 'ethnic' and 'nation'.

Different weight is given to the role of language from theory to theory, though there seems to be consensus around the fact that it plays an essential role in nation formation (Brubaker, 1997). I believe, from an empirical point of view, that language is seen as *the* essential ingredient in nation formation in Eastern Europe. While in the West, language is seen only as a part of a complex process of cultural innovation, involving 'hard, ideological labour, careful propaganda, and a creative imagination'. (Eley and Suny,

1996, p. 7). Dictionaries and elementary primers are the basic elements of what becomes a national culture, the first on which other cultural artefacts are built, such as literature, poetry, theatre, music, opera and painting, popular festivals, national dress, flags, rituals, insignia, anthems and so on. A collective memory is created from commemorating real or invented heroic events, from manufacturing and manipulating a particular view of the past, 'invariably as myths of origin', which are intended to establish and legitimate the claim to cultural autonomy and political legitimacy (ibid., p. 7).

Anderson and Smith and to a certain degree Gellner, too, mention the Romantic period and its cultural and social elite as being a significant factor in creating or shaping national identity. Raising national awareness became one of the core principles of the Romantic Movement on the Continent. Creating a national literature in the vernacular language and the establishment of education in the same language were respectively the central preoccupations of the artistic and political currents of Romanticism. This has been acknowledged by other scholars who observed the formation of nations. For instance, Kedourie (1996) sees nationalism as originating in the philosophical framework set up by Kant, Fichte and Herder, the French Revolution and Romanticism, that developed into a political ideology. This, however, creates some problems, as the Romantic period has not had the same impact or manifestation everywhere. It would be hard to find the same preoccupations with political nationhood in English Romanticism as with the Romantic revolutionaries in Eastern and Central Europe. Interestingly,

Romanticism in Scotland has more in common with those societies than with neighbouring England.

Most theories acknowledge such differences between how nations were formed in different geographic areas of Europe (Mac Laughlin, 2001). In order to explain these differences, various classifications have been devised according to which nations on the Western fringe of Europe are invariably in a different category from those in Eastern Europe. Gellner speaks about different 'time zones' on the political map of Europe and societies are classified according to the chronological development of the relationship between culture and state. In the first such zone, strong dynastic states more or less corresponded to cultural-linguistic zones, even before the nationalist theory decreed that such a correlation was necessary (Gellner, 1997, p. 51). So this area - which largely meant Europe's Atlantic coast and the societies that sprang around it - had been confronted less with the conscious need to artificially invent a nation. This does not mean that these states were naturally endowed with 'nations', but there was less conflict and more certainty around identity, loyalty and cultural boundaries.

In his third zone, Gellner includes most of Central Europe and the Balkans, where neither state nor culture was ready to be fused together in a nation state. Both had to be created, and in most cases the creation of the nation state was accompanied by extreme violence. Culture had to be invented also and the model was taken from the long established societies from the first 'time-zone'. Here the process of the imagining of

nations is probably the most apparent, bearing most of the features Anderson has pointed out. There is ground for some confusion, because Gellner goes on speaking about a fourth zone within Eastern Europe: societies that were under Soviet occupation for seventy or forty-five years, and where the process of nation creation has been artificially halted or derailed. Some of these societies have now 'to catch up' with the rest of the continent and (re-)establish their national identity, hence the haste and violence of recent years. (ibid., pp. 54-58)

As mentioned above, in Eastern Europe the role of language is predominant, with national boundaries seen to be identical with linguistic frontiers, and the nation-state is built upon one linguistic community, even if the geographical territory ascribed to such a state contains a number of different linguistic communities. Such overlapping tends to create in the best of cases, so called 'spiritual' communities, that is, the members of the same linguistic community tend to consider themselves as belonging to one single nation, even though they live in different societies, as national minorities. For most societies in the region the priority was (and for some, still is) to reunite all the members of the 'spiritual' community within the frontiers of a nation state. Together with the tendencies to eliminate 'alien' cultural or linguistic communities from their territories, either through assimilation or through ethnic cleansing, most of the governments still pursue a conscious agenda of nation-creation and, in the best case, of 'nation-consolidation'.

Historically, nation-building elites have built a militant ideology that helped implement their political agenda (Featherstone, et al., 1995). Freedom or liberation movements in the past used in their struggle the doctrine of nationalism as a positive, benign, and legitimate ideology. Nationalism acquired its negative connotations once nation building had finished, but nationalism had still been preserved as a political weapon. Many societies, within the conditions of late-modernity claim to have outgrown such instincts (Giddens, 1991). Nationalism, nevertheless, seems to survive and be an inseparable attribute of nationhood in the contemporary world, and it is intrinsically associated with the concept of nation in a conflictual context. There is some consensus what currently can be considered as 'nationalism', whether it is manifest in the violent dissolution of Eastern and Central European states, the persecution of minority groups or separatist movements and the counter-reaction they generate. Mostly these manifestations are to be found in Eastern Europe or in some isolated anachronistic conflict zones such as Northern Ireland (Delanty and O' Mahony, 2002).

A threefold distinction can be introduced in the overall periodisation of nationalism: between the structural processes of state formation (often referred as 'nation-building'), in an earlier period of the history of Northern and Western Europe; the emergence of nationalism as a specific ideological and cultural innovation, particularly among peoples aspiring to a measure of political independence; and finally processes of cultural unification, under centralising governments (Eley and Suny, 1996, p. 9). On this basis, nationalism becomes a clear instance of historical contingency, linked to political

intervention, new ideologies, and cultural change, and expressing a transformation of social identity, initially on the part of the individual, but eventually for whole populations. The language of nationalism has given particular shape and meaning to historic social and cultural developments, and the modern representation of ethnicity became associated with the nationalist discourse *per se*. Nationalism did not arise spontaneously from prior existing nationality, as most nationalists would suggest. Nationalism contributed both to the formation of nationality, often based on evolving ethnolinguistic or ethnoreligious communities, and evolved itself to become the political expression of mobilised nationalities (ibid., p. 11). This categorisation would find its best illustration in the complex and asynchronous development of various states in Europe.

Generally, the received wisdom is that states within the Western and Northern confines of Europe have achieved their political and cultural unification and have largely evolved through modernity into contemporary late-modernity. Nationalism would thus be anachronistic and devoid of any function. It should have disappeared entirely or been relegated to the eccentric fringes of the political sphere. Billig (1995), however, challenges this position, finely illustrating in his text, *Banal Nationalism*, that everyday life in late-modern societies are imbued with more subtle manifestations of nationalism. Old fashioned, enflamed nationalistic rhetoric has largely disappeared or morphed, according to Billig, into seemingly innocuous everyday social practices, such as: flying national colours at sporting events, historical commemorations and celebrations, presentation and selection of the news in mass media *et cetera*. The banal facts of

everyday life, whether of television or in newspapers, or more importantly in schools, relentlessly single out the uniqueness and importance of one's own nation above other nations. This creates, through repetition and internalisation, a fertile ground for an outbreak of 'hot' nationalism if the opportunity arises. For example, Billig illustrates this with responses to the Falkland War. Although Billig critiques the notion that there is no nationalism in the West, analysing the everyday manifestations of banal nationalism, there are fundamental differences in the way people relate to the idea of national identity in societies where 'banal nationalism' dominates and those ravaged by what he calls 'hot' nationalism.

In carrying out my empirical work in Romanian and UK schools, I became aware of the serious limitations of assuming a common framework to understand nation-making among pupils. In reading the above literature on the nation, I gained a more conceptually sophisticated explanation of why this was the case in relation to different geographies and different histories.

3. Making sense of 'race'

My initial attempt to ground this research project within the context of theories of 'nation' was not successful. As pointed out above, the use of most theories of nation made my comparative analysis rather cumbersome, which, in turn, would throw doubt on the validity of any possible findings. It became clear that I could not find a common

frame of reference within these theories to encompass the everyday reality in both Romania and the UK. Further exploration of the field might have proved more fruitful, but I felt I reached a limit in the exploration of one direction of the literature review. Equally important, in attempting to link up the literature on 'nation' to education, I discovered a surprising paucity of theoretical explorations of national identity formation within education.

During the last few decades, the most productive field of research in Britain concerning issues of identity and inclusion/exclusion in education is focused not on 'nation', but on the exploration of 'race', ethnicity, and racism. Engaging with this literature seemed to be a productive way forward, while at the same time I was hoping that I might find subsumed issues of national identity within it. It also seemed a necessary first step forward in understanding the state of play of current debates on education, citizenship, and identity within the UK. At the same time, what became clear was that using the theoretical paradigms of 'race' might be more successful in providing a common framework for the comparative context of this research. Notions of colour racism and race have not the same significance in Romania as they have in the UK. Romania does not have a colonial past with the ensuing implications and its minorities are more likely to be 'national' or 'ethnic' than racial. I would argue that the Gypsy minority in Romania is a rather more complex issue than a simple question of 'race'. Though British theorists might claim this was also true in relation to ethnic minorities in the UK (Rex,

1986; Brah, 1991). Nevertheless, I thought it would be useful to engage with historical and contemporary debates within the UK for the above-mentioned reasons.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was an explosion of academic work located within a race-relations perspective (see Jones, 1983; Mason, 1995). This work was important in establishing the historical roots of key terms such as race, emerging in its modern form between the end of the eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth centuries (Banton, 1977). The approach examined a range of, what might today be referred to as, lifestyles of minority ethnic groups, with a detailed focus upon the cultural specificities of how they lived their lives. Alongside this, there was a major concern with how new migrants were adapting to British institutions, such as employment, education and housing (Thomson, 1977). Hence, there followed an examination of the inter-ethnic relations between the 'host' community and new arrivals. From a culturalist perspective, there were major discussions, particularly about 'commonwealth immigrants', as to whether they were assimilating or integrating into Britain (Smith, 1977). A further focus was the next generation, children of immigrants who were born in Britain. These texts indicate the beginnings of a debate, that is still resonating, of whether this 'second generation' primarily identifies with their parents' home of origin or the young people's place of birth (Simpson and Yinger, 1965). Interestingly, as a theoretical frame it often converged with media culturalist assumptions, and indeed the general public, and hence was highly influential in helping the wider society to adapt to new migrants in terms of establishing liberal race relations legislation and more

generally multi-cultural policies (Commission for Racial Equality, 1988). This can be contrasted with current post-colonialist theories that are often rather abstract and disengaged from everyday life, for example, in relation to institutions.

As indicated above, theoretically and politically the main challenge to the race relations perspective came from class-based accounts that set out to produce a major paradigm shift. Working with a radical framework, juxtaposed to the liberal reform of a race relations position, the former argued for a move away from a focus concentrating on individual migrants and questions of culture to critically exploring structures of British society and questions of social and economic exploitation located within the British class system as part of the wider international system of capitalism. Hence, a starting point of this explanation was that there were socio-economic factors that underpinned post-war migration that were functional to the current stage of advanced capitalist development with its drive for expansion. It was these structural social relations, not the cultural specificities of individual ethnic minority communities, that must be the starting point of research. The most significant work was produced by Weberian and Marxist scholars, who, alongside their critique of the above work, often developed their own positions in opposition to each other (Rex, 1973; Rex and Mason, 1986; Sivanandan, 1982; Miles, 1989). A major implication of this shift was a move away from a more descriptive methodological stance to that in search of comprehensive explanations.

Rex (1973), operating within a Weberian tradition provided some of the most influential analytical frameworks within which to examine racially structured western societies. From within this tradition, he saw classes as located within each of the primary market situations of employment, housing, and education, in which there is competition for scarce resources. For example, Rex and Moore's (1967) text, *Race, Community and Conflict*, remains a classic non-reductionist social investigation of the operation of institutional racist mechanisms working against the Asian and African-Caribbean communities. These mechanisms maintained these subordinated groups within the different allocative systems at the lowest levels of society. In his later work, he innovatively developed this analysis, claiming that black people constitute an 'underclass', (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979). There has been a range of understandings of this term, especially from the US (Murray, 1989). Rex's emphasis was that the black community, while experiencing institutionalised subordination compared to the white working-class, were in the process of disidentifying with the traditional (white) labour movement and mobilising among themselves to form separate political organisations. Marxists were at the forefront of critiquing Rex's theoretical account of how race and class intersected. For example, for Hall (1990) a major weakness of Rex's Weberian approach is that the analysis remains at the level of a set of descriptive plural explanations, thus it lacks an adequate theorization with reference to relations of production. The Marxist core analytical framework, which for Marxists was their theoretical strength but for critics a major weakness, was that the defining feature of racially structured societies needed to address (capitalist) political economic structures.

In short, post-war migration was an economic and political response to labour shortages in advanced industrial societies, with immigrants acting as a replacement population.

By the early 2000s, there has been a radical rethinking of racial and ethnic relations, particularly generated by post-colonial and new ethnicity theorists (Gilroy, 1993; Said, 1993). These theories need to be located within a wider cultural shift away from the enlightenment-based modernist theory. May (1996, p. 8) in his text, *Situating Theory* discusses the centrality of the enlightenment for the development of social theory in modern western societies, which has provided the mental scaffolding for a new framework within which to rethink the relationship between man/woman, society and nature. He maintains that these new ideas, alongside government practice, produced a number of core themes. These were: 'First, a concept of freedom based upon an autonomous human subject which is capable of acting in a conscious manner. Second, the pursuit of a universal and foundational 'truth' gained through a correspondence of ideas with social and physical reality. Third, a belief in the natural sciences as the correct model for thinking about the social and natural world over, for example, theology and metaphysics. Fourth, the accumulation of systematic knowledge with the progressive unfolding of history' (ibid.). May maintains that these changes cumulatively operated as catalysts underpinning the scientific study of human society. It is these core beliefs that are currently being challenged in anti-foundational cultural theories, including postmodernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism (Baudrillard, 1983; Derrida, 1978; Foucault, 1992; see Habermas, 1992 for defence of modernity). This shift started

with identity politics, in which the categories of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality moved centre stage in displacing the modernist concept of social class as central to our understanding of both our social position in the world and the accompanying sense of subjectivity and identity. In short, new social movements, including feminism, black struggles, national liberation movements, gay and lesbian rights, and anti-nuclear and ecology movements, challenged the privileging of class relations, through which other social categories were mediated (Mirza, 1997). Contemporary cultural theorists have pushed this analysis further by challenging the western tradition and its universalist claims about the social world. For example, Rattansi and Westwood (1994, p. 3) have noted that: 'Issues of racism are crucially implicated in the question mark over Western modernity, for another side of this modernity has been its close involvement with, indeed its legitimation of, Western genocide against aboriginal peoples, slavery, colonial domination and exploitation, and the Holocaust, in all of which Western doctrines of 'racial' and cultural superiority have played a considerable role'.

This more complex picture has been greatly developed, as indicated above, by post-colonial and new ethnicity theorists, who have constructed a new language around such notions as diaspora (movement of people-cultural dispersal), hybridity (mixing of cultures) and syncretism (pluralistic forms of cultural belonging) (Bhabha, 1994, Spivak, 1988; Gilroy, 1993; Said, 1993). For them, in the social construction of human identity, there cannot be any simple appeal to fixed or essential characteristics that exist for all time. Furthermore, racialised social relations are more adequately understood within

specific local contexts, for example, a national context, such as Romania or the UK, in which they are performed. At the same time, post-colonial theorists are involved in a core conceptual move, in which they have argued for the urgent need to go beyond the black-white model of racism – the colour paradigm. Rather, they suggest a need to move towards a paradigm in which cultural and religious identities are foregrounded. In this questioning of the fixity of boundaries around colour racism that resulted from political mobilizations and academic discourse established during 1970s and 1980s, they are arguing that the conditions of late modernity are helping to establish multiple forms of racisms, diverse representations of new ethnicities and impelling new political subjects as part of a life politics (Giddens, 1991).

At present, under pressure from a range of far-right electoral successes in Europe, and a constant press campaign against immigration and European Integration, debates have opened up focussing on the notion of citizenship as subsuming concepts of language, race, ethnicity, and nationality.

4. Making sense of multiculturalism and anti-racism

Following the challenges outlined in the previous section, notably the diversity resulting from the post-war migration, education faces its own challenges. The post-colonial society that was emerging within the UK from the demise of the Empire and later with the emergence of globalisation, engendered a *de-facto* pluralism that eventually needed

to be addressed in order to maintain social cohesion and re-establish social justice (Rattansi, 1992). From a contemporary perspective, earlier educational strategies are seen to lack the theoretical grounding and sophistication required for understanding the 'new times' and the creation of effective anti-discrimination strategies (Hall and Jacques, 1989). The development of anti-racism and multiculturalism have led, on the one hand, to more inclusive policies and practice in education, on the other, to a divisive debate on the political Left about the appropriate strategy to achieve similar goals (May, 1999).

Both anti-racists and multiculturalists share a number of common goals, as they both advocate greater equity in education and both are concerned with developing organisational, curricular, and pedagogical strategies to counter the influence of racism in its various forms, alongside xenophobia and ethnocentrism. There have been a number of ruptures between the two, however, which became more readily visible in the UK in the 1990s (Troyna, 1993; Gillborn, 2004) as anti-racists underlined the importance of institutional racism in education and emphasised the importance of the 'hidden curriculum' in reproducing race and ethnic inequalities in school and the wider society. Multiculturalists appeared to be more concerned with the celebration of cultural diversity through the formal curriculum and with addressing psychological issues relating to self-esteem and prejudice among ethnic majority individuals (Carrington and Bonnett, 1997).

Anti-racism, with its grounding in Marxism and radical politics, emphasised structural inequalities generated by racism and thus, according to its critics, generated an unproductive reductionism to, and reification of, race leading to accusations of essentialism and either a neglect of other major social categories, including class, gender, and sexuality, or a limited conceptual understanding of the complex inter-relations between such categories. Multiculturalism might be read as offering a more complex solution within the context of schools, suggesting a whole series of pedagogical explorations of understanding of difference and inequality beyond the black-white dichotomy. Multiculturalism as theory can be seen as originating in the United States and its original aims in education were later synthesised by Nieto in Figueroa (1999) as a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students which should combat racism, affirm pluralism and promote social justice. It would permeate the curriculum and instructional strategies, together with the interaction among teachers, students and parents, and also the way that the schools conceptualise teaching and learning.

Figueroa (1999) describes the aims and function of multicultural and antiracist education within the context of the particular situation of post-Thatcherite Britain. He states that:

There are three major and complex features of society that are central to these concerns: diversity, inequality and racism. Correspondingly, there are three relevant sets of fundamental social and educational values: pluralism, that is, acceptance of, respect for, valuing of and openness to, diversity: equity, justice,

human rights; anti-racism, that is, open-mindedness, inclusiveness, concord and critical thinking. Permeating these values is a system of democratic values. These include the notions that everyone is equal as a human person and therefore all share the same basic rights and obligations; everyone should have an equitable say in determining the future; and decisions should be made on the basis of reason and evidence, and through debate and dialogue. The challenge of multicultural anti-racist education consists essentially of the complex set of tasks that these three features informed by these values define. (p. 283)

Over the last few decades within the UK, multiculturalism and antiracism became an arena for political confrontation between Left and Right, as various administrative and legislative acts have attempted to realign the field. In 1985, the Swann Report suggested that a 'full and balanced' curriculum incorporating a global perspective should be accessible to all children. Cultural diversity should be presented in a positive light and every school should play a role in challenging racism. Tomlinson (1996) sees the Swann Report as 'perhaps the most consciously multicultural document ever produced in England' (p. 123). The school curriculum reflected these changes; as Tomlinson (1996) points out, teachers and teaching practices began to implement a multicultural and non-racist approach to education, reflecting the realities of post-imperial Britain. A more sympathetic view of the needs of ethnic minority students was integrated into everyday practice, despite an increasingly hostile public opinion. The central government of the time, however, implemented very few of the recommendations of the Report, especially in the Education Reform Act which followed in 1988. The Act was seen as unduly centralising the education system and undermining Local Educational Authorities and,

in this context, the anti-racist and multicultural initiatives implemented by the LEAs in multiethnic areas. The overall effect of the Act, along with its intentions in this field, was contradictory. Although it states that 'schools need to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life', it focuses on narrow definitions of culture, as it becomes apparent from its emphasis on the promotion of a 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' for religious education (Gilborn, 1995).

One of the most important outcomes of this Act was the establishment of the National Curriculum. Beginning with the National Curriculum Council and currently the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, a long series of bodies and directives have elaborated guidelines and recommendations that have attempted to put into practice some of the ideas of the Swann Report. A major shortcoming of the National Curriculum in relation to this was that it had a narrow subject based orientation that did not include in its initial prescriptive content any reference to multiculturalism and antiracism (Figueroa, 1999). Later guidelines on cross-curricular activities would attempt to remedy this and also two initiatives of the Nation Curriculum Council made specific references to the need of promoting values of pluralism, diversity and anti-racism. *The Whole Curriculum* (NCC 1990a) published in 1990 makes specific reference to:

A commitment to provide equal opportunities for all pupils, and a recognition that preparation for life in a multicultural society is relevant to all pupils, should

permeate every aspect of the curriculum. [...] Introducing multicultural perspectives into the curriculum is a way of enriching the education of all our pupils. It gives pupils the opportunity to view the world from different standpoints, helping them to question prejudice and develop open-mindedness (p. 3)

Education for Citizenship (NCC 1990b) published in the same year offers guidelines for dealing with 'a pluralist' society within the framework of the National Curriculum, as cross-curricular activities. It defines Britain 'as a multicultural, multiethnic, multifaith, and multilingual society' (p. 7).

The New Labour government published its White Paper on education *Excellence in Schools* in 1997 in which it reaffirms the need to place multiculturalism and anti-racism within the context of the new ethos of raising achievement in schools. Two more significant steps in this direction came from the publication of the Crick Report in 1998 (QCA, 1998) and the Macpherson Report in 1999. They both placed much greater emphasis on an open discussion of racism and diversity than previous documents. The Crick Report resulted in placing Citizenship Education among the statutory subjects of the National Curriculum, while the Macpherson Report gave a new relevance to the notion of 'institutional racism' and its prevalence in society. A different vision of multiculturalism was suggested by the Parekh Report (2000) and its comprehensive recommendations on the future of multi-ethnic Britain. It suggested a vision of society as 'a community of communities', but it also offered an impressive agenda for institutional reform in order to reduce racial violence and discrimination. New Labour

did adopt many aspects of a communitarian vision of society and some policy initiatives in the field of race and education are developing in this direction (such as supporting the expansion of educational provisions by religious organisations).

A positive discourse promoting multiculturalism has been always countered by a counter-discourse of the Right, which while defending a traditional, monolithic vision of Britishness has ridiculed the initiatives and practices of the Left. This discourse of derision, as a critique of multiculturalism, stated that such developments would threaten the nation's cultural heritage and identity, as well as eroding educational standards (Crawford, 1996). The Hillgate Group, Dr Nick Tate, and Lord Tebbit, amongst others, developed a powerful populist critique of the tenets of multiculturalism and anti-racism, amplified by the tabloid press, leading to a marginalisation of policy making and practice. Ball (1990) suggested the term 'cultural restorationism' for this movement which combined a neo-liberal economic agenda of education for work with a neo-conservative cultural agenda based on Christianity, a return to Classical and Enlightenment canons in education, universal morality and, in general, an idealised, nostalgic view of the past. The nation was imagined to be under threat from the emerging diversity of late-modern society and the suggested solution was a return to 'traditional values' in morality and culture, and the place to promote them was education and the National Curriculum (Crawford 1996).

After the 1997 elections, the debate did not resurface in the same terms and with the same intensity, but neither did multiculturalism become a mainstream feature of the new policy initiatives of the Labour Government. Gillborn (2000) draws attention to a great number of continuities with the previous government's ideology on race and education, notably the colour-blind policies and marketisation, which further entrenched racial and ethnic inequalities. Also, the present situation still does not seem to address one of the major unresolved issues of citizenship in Britain; according to Tomlinson (1996) that is, 'the incorporation of groups perceived as ethnically, racially or culturally different, as equal citizens within the boundaries of a 'British' national identity.' (p. 129). Acknowledging the evolution of theory, policy and practice, May (1999) extends the scope of multiculturalism to take into account the criticisms emerging from both left and right, and develops a more complex critical methodology based on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. In his view, the aim is to develop a non-essentialist politics of cultural difference, by deconstructing the claims of the liberal state to neutrality and universalism in order to uncover the historical and cultural situatedness and cultural specificity of dominant majorities.

These cultural relations are situated within a nexus of wider power relations in society.

For May (1999),

Critical multiculturalism needs both to recognise and incorporate the differing cultural knowledges that children bring with them to school, while at the same time address and contest the differential cultural capital attributed to them as a

result of wider hegemonic power relations. In short, culture has to be understood as part of the discourse of power and inequality. (p. 32)

A non-essentialist critical multiculturalism has to maintain a reflexive critique of specific cultural practices that would avoid cultural relativism and would allow for an internal and external criticism of the group, leading to transformation and change. In this way, critical multiculturalism can be a flexible tool that is able to withstand the attacks of the New Right based on cultural racism (Ball, 1990) and answer some of the criticism of the anti-racist movement about the lack of engagement with the idea of social change. Thus, it can fulfil its mission to

....foster students who can engage critically with all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including their own. Such an approach would allow both minority and majority students to recognise and explore the complex interconnections, gaps and dissonances that occur between their own and other ethnic and cultural identities, as well as other forms of social identity. (ibid. p. 33)

At a theoretical level, the debate in Romania is significantly underdeveloped compared to the UK. Anti-racism and multiculturalism in Romania does not seem to generate the same explorations in theory or practice, and there is little if any coherent intellectual exploration of issues relating to race and diversity. The agenda for debate is set almost exclusively in political terms and, at best, it is supported by historical analyses and more recently by comparative juxtapositions of Western models. At the present moment, there is no comparable movement to anti-racism, while multiculturalism, although in common currency, needs to be unpacked for a Western audience.

Within Romania, multiculturalism as a concept is entirely new and although the term is now commonly used, it does not have the same meaning as in Britain. Marga (2003) talks about multiculturalism in the context of higher education at the Universities of Transylvania as a way of creating 'diverse institutions reflecting contemporary society'. What lies behind this phrase is a political response of post-communist governments to the question of education in minority languages, notably in Hungarian. After the collapse of the Communist regime, the Hungarian minority demanded a restoration of its cultural and educational institutions to their state either before the Second World War or under a particular period of the Soviet occupation in the 1950s, which had a very favourable position on ethnic minorities. This would have resulted in a separate educational system for speakers of Hungarian, from kindergarten to university. After lengthy political debates, this was partially achieved as a separate schooling infrastructure was created up to the level of high schools but not for universities. All post-communist governments have resisted the claim of restoring the Hungarian university at Cluj, as this was considered a dangerous sign of separatism that would eventually lead to administrative and territorial break-up of the country. Andrei Marga, who was for most of the 1990s, rector of the joint Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj, imported the concept of multiculturalism and applied it to a model of higher education reorganisation, which he pioneered when he became Minister for Education, in the late 1990s. In this model, a multicultural institution offers separate and equal provisions to members of majority and minority ethnic groups. The University in Cluj was set up to offer most courses in at least two languages, Romanian and Hungarian, and in order to

avoid the '*biculturalism*' accusation, in German as well. Later, positive discriminatory initiatives were put in place for Roma students in the admission policies. This policy resulted in parallel systems of education that rarely intersected with each other and when that did occur, contact generated conflict or resentment while competing for limited resources. Clearly, multiculturalism in this context might be read as a rather dubious political subterfuge and, in my view, an abusive and exploitative usage of the term.

In trying to understand the question of difference and pluralism – or the lack of it – one has to look at the complex issues of national and ethnic minorities in the context of post-communist realities. Tismăneanu (1993, 1998, 1999) and Gallagher (1995, 98) describe the complex relationship between the democratisation of Romanian society and the question of national minorities. Pluralism within this context has little to do with a coherent grounding in theory, such as post-structuralism or post-modernism, but rather more with the outcome of complex political negotiations between more liberal or more radical nationalistic agendas. Within this context, the struggle continues for the granting of cultural and educational rights for national minorities, although this agenda is motivated by an equal mixture of separatist, nationalist politics of national resurgence and a pluralist vision of the role of national minorities in a democratic society within a united Europe. In my experience, it is sometimes quite hard to discriminate between the proponents of the two tendencies.

Opposed to this position is the central government, the majority of the Romanian language media and public opinion. Their position is justified by a tradition of suspicion towards national minorities in contemporary Romanian history as illustrated by Mitu (1997) and Boia (2002a, 2002b), where an early modernist agenda of nation building has been elevated above the individual rights of citizens. This agenda has survived the half century of communism and it is still one of the dominant discourses of Romanian politics. This antagonistic interplay between demands for pluralism and instincts of preservation of dominance are not limited to present day Eastern Europe only, as Grant (1997b) points out:

Historically, policies of assimilating minorities have been far the commonest, apart from total exclusion and have been pursued by the discouragement of the norms of the minority or the dominated cultures, but this has now shifted somewhat, via limited tolerance and pseudo-pluralism, in a hesitantly pluralist direction. Completely pluralist societies are still relatively rare. [...] most recent developments in the direction of pluralism are incomplete and, indeed, one of the major concerns in the countries in question is how far the recognition of cultural variety can be reconciled with the claims of national unity and security. It is important to recognise, however, that unity can be compatible with pluralist policy, provided the unity element is not seen simply as an automatic assimilation of the majority mode, but conceived as something valid for the community as a whole. [...] As yet, this is an extremely uncommon state of affairs, as majorities still seldom think in this way. (p. 25)

The above provides an understanding of the current state of play. For many people in Romania, however, hope of change emerges from the process of EU integration and the

legal necessities implied by the accelerated assimilation of the *acquis* in the constitutional framework. Mungiu-Pippidi (1998, 2002) draws attention to the possible difficulties of such an accelerated development from a much earlier state of nation building and consolidation typical of early modernity to the late-modernity condition of a trans-national and post-national European integration process.

Anti-racism is another process that has just started to develop in the specific context of the region. As the historical evolution of the region did not experience the same kind of migration as experienced in the former imperial centres of the West, colour racism is largely circumscribed to the Roma problem. The successive governments have taken very few effective initiatives to combat discrimination against, or extreme economic deprivation within, the Roma community. Again, hope for change seems to come from the EU integration, as several other Central and East European countries with large Roma populations have recently become EU members and thus the Roma question has become a pan-European issue. Romania is lined up for EU membership in 2007 and hopefully by that date a coherent strategy for the Roma will emerge from the European institutions.

At the level of schooling, the debate is hotly disputed about the content of the curriculum and of the use of classroom textbooks, especially in the subjects of History, Geography, and Literature. Progress has been made by departing from a long tradition of overtly nationalistic content that either denies the existence of minorities or presents

them in a negative light. As a study carried out in 1998 by the Centre for the Research of Interethnic Relations in Transylvania remarks, the images propagated by the official curriculum were extremely negative and their effect will linger on long after such content has ceased to be used. Nevertheless, an attempted neutral approach to highly contentious matters in History and Geography is preferable to past curriculum policies.

There is still a lot of progress to be made in implementing a pluralist curriculum that acknowledges the cultural values of both minorities and the majority. At this stage, only minority children are required to learn about the culture, history, and language of the majority, while those belonging to the Romanian majority learn very little about the national and ethnic minorities living amongst them. Anti-racism also needs to become a higher priority, not only to challenge discrimination of the Roma, but also to prepare Romanians for the arrival of increased numbers of legal and illegal immigrants now that the country is getting closer to EU membership.

In the United Kingdom, a sophisticated, though divisive, debate has firmly put on the map the issues of pluralism in education. Critical multiculturalism theoretically offers a coherent tool for understanding many of these issues. Practice, however, does not always keep pace with the development of theory and this presents its own challenges for the future in developing an effective pedagogy. This is underlined by the added urgency of recent events, such as the increased Islamophobia following 9/11 and the

surprising increase of xenophobia in most European countries, manifested in electoral success of anti-immigration agendas.

Within Romania, there are similar challenges, as the country is becoming connected to the processes of European integration. The idiosyncratic nature of the contentious issues discussed above, however, requires local/national solutions. For example, policies dealing with the considerable Hungarian minority need to be grounded in principles of equality and pluralism and not the outcome of transient political negotiations for establishing parliamentary majorities. At the same time, regarding the treatment of the Roma, groundbreaking change is urgently required in every aspect of public policy. To what extent these challenges will be answered by the powerful modernising process developing under the banner of EU integration is open to speculation. I hope that my pessimism will be proved wrong by an improved state of affairs during the next decade.

5. Making sense of citizenship

The teaching of citizenship in the UK has long been a contentious issue. On the one hand, it was deployed as a vehicle to reflect and reproduce the dominant ideology of a specific historical moment; while on the other hand, it has rarely been translated into specific educational initiatives. It has a history of marginalisation within the general curriculum, while it has always been considered of central importance in political discourse. As Kerr (in Crawford and Foster 2000, p. 96) remarks:

The history of education for citizenship in England is a curious mixture of noble intentions, which are then turned into general pronouncements, which, in turn, become minimal guidance for schools. The avoidance of any overt official government direction to schools concerning political socialisation and citizenship education can almost be seen as a national trait. Such education has long been perceived as unbecoming, vulgar, and 'unEnglish'. It explains why when citizenship education has periodically come to the fore in the English education system, it has been located, primarily, in the implicit or hidden curriculum rather than in the explicit or formal curriculum.

Besides being 'unEnglish' or vulgar, citizenship education could have been seen as a highly adventurous enterprise, as the concept of 'citizenship' itself is both highly contested and unfamiliar in the British context. Going beyond the 'citizen' versus 'subject' debate in the constitutional framework (or the lack of one), the nature of citizenship as a reflection of ideology and practice has been problematic and constantly changing. Reflecting on its history (Landrum, 2000), several competing concepts of citizenship have emerged from philosophical schools of thoughts, concepts which in turn have been embraced and further developed in practice by political movements. Developed from the Classical, Civic-Republican tradition of Graeco-Roman history, the modern concept of citizenship in its first form placed a greater emphasis on the role of the state and on the obligation of the individual as citizen towards the state. A later stage was the development of the Liberal Individualist tradition which was a response to the development of industrialised society and which attempted to balance the rights and freedoms of the individual in relation to the powers of the state. A more recent

concept of citizenship is the notion of Social Citizenship, embraced by the liberal left after the Second World War, which spoke of the need for economic equality in society, alongside civic and legal equality between individuals. The New Right in the 1980s developed the concept of Active Citizenship, which in the neo-liberal definition emphasises a dynamic individual who is self-reliant, responsible for his/her action and possesses a sense of civic virtue and pride in both country and local community (Landrum 2000). Such a citizen is more a social entrepreneur who is empowered not by democracy, but by property ownership. Solidarity in society is replaced by voluntary actions and political participation is rather local than national.

It is interesting to note that many recent concepts of citizenship have turned back to the classic concepts enumerated above and that they have also integrated significant elements from each of the main theories. The New Labour concept of citizenship continues the same tradition of building on previous traditions of Civic, Liberal, Social, or Active Citizenship. The Crick Report, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (QCA, 1998) can be considered the most comprehensive document that sums up New Labour's vision on the issue of citizenship. As Crawford and Foster (2000) suggest, the Crick Report defined citizenship as having three predominant strands. First, it recommends social and moral responsibility, as a way for children to acquire self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour, in and out of school, towards those in authority and towards each other. This can be traced back to the civic tradition of citizenship, with emphasis on the good functioning of the state.

Social and moral responsibility is claimed to be a precondition for the other two strands: community involvement and political literacy. Community involvement is intended to help children learn about and become involved in the life and concerns of their community. The communitarianism advocated here has much in common with the Liberal-Individualist tradition or with the more recent Conservative idea of Active Citizenship. The third element, political literacy, is to teach pupils about political institutions and public life and consequent participation in them.

However, the Crick Report has also suggested a different vision of citizenship that is built around a more coherent and cohesive concept of nationhood as 'community':

A main aim for the whole community should be to find or restore a sense of common citizenship, including a national identity that is secure enough to find a place for the plurality of nations, cultures, ethnic identities and religions long found in the United Kingdom. Citizenship education creates a common ground between different ethnic and religious identities. (QCA, 1998, p. 19)

A crucial, novel outcome of the Crick Report was the revised National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999) which included for the first time Citizenship as a statutory subject in secondary schools from August 2002. This lifted the teaching of citizenship out of a cross-curricular fragmented state and allocated a more central position to it, though the content of these classes has not been clearly delineated nor is it less contested on political or moral grounds.

Linking citizenship with nationhood is rather problematic, as McCrone and Kiely (2000) have pointed out. The interplay of its various components and 'fuzziness' of its nature makes British citizenship and nationhood particularly complex at the present, in the context of devolution and European integration. There is a need to redefine the various contents attributed to Britishness, the British state, and nationality. The question that is asked is whether Britain is a nation-state as some other European societies or is it a 'multi-national and multicultural state' (ibid. p. 19) that has to redefine its relationship with its dominant English component and the non-English element. McCrone and Kiely ask the question, whether Britishness is relevant as an identity to be taken up by the Scottish and Welsh population at the present time when a new constitutional framework helps reassert a civic nationalism which can see itself tempted by the regionalist dimension of the European integration processes. Also, non-white ethnic minority communities may find British identity problematic, even used with a hyphen, due to its connotations of an imperial past (ibid. p. 20). Finally, the customary conflation of English with British does not help either. A further difficulty is added by the lack of clarity around the constitutional status of whether the British are citizens or subjects. All these elements together represent a major challenge for the United Kingdom in the 21st century, but make it rather difficult to address in a coherent manner the debate about what kind of citizenship should be promoted during Citizenship classes.

The Crick Report and the resulting curriculum policies have been subjected to a number of criticisms, both from the left and the right of the political spectrum. Tooley (2000)

criticised it for two reasons: firstly, on the grounds that it is not the business of the state to directly foster citizenship through interventions in education, and secondly, that many of the tenets of the Crick Report are informed by a left-wing, anti-capitalist and environmentalist bias. For Osler (2000), the Crick Report lacks direct references to specific issues of anti-racism, although, there are sufficiently broad references to diversity and pluralism, which would certainly include the category of race, as is apparent from the overall ethos of the Report. A more substantial criticism comes from Olssen (2004), who attempts to explore the tension between the liberal and multicultural approach to citizenship in the Crick Report. He contrasts it with the Parekh Report, which he maintains provides a more comprehensive grounding for a more sophisticated multiculturalism, while the Crick Report 'is suspicious of departure from the presumption of a unified social structure and represents citizenship education as the imposition of a uniform standard applied to all groups and peoples' (p. 179). He argues that there is room within liberal approaches to citizenship education for recognition of difference.

Within the context of Romania, the collapse of the Ceauşescu regime initiated a collapse of totalitarian control and involved major social and political changes. Unlike other Eastern European countries (for example, Hungary), there was no embryonic civil society to take its place. The communist government could be best described as dynastic socialism. As a result, post-Ceauşescu social and economic development is slow and patchy. Romania therefore presents an unprecedented challenge for citizenship

programmes in school despite various obstacles (for example, the paucity of resources and teachers' lack of understanding of democracy). In February 1999, the Romanian Ministry of Education issued such a programme with an emphasis on individual responsibility and political understanding; however, lack of resources has hampered real progress.

Crawford and Foster (2000) carried out a comparative case study on England and Romania on the teaching of citizenship in two schools, investigating policy documents, curriculum provisions and teachers' perspectives, as well as in-depth discussions with 60 students in each country, between the ages of 15-17. They have uncovered a surprising number of commonalities, alongside the more obvious differences in content and approach. They focused on the development of the awareness of rights and responsibilities as well as of the active involvement of citizens in democratic processes.

Their conclusion was that:

Schools in the UK and Romania face a considerable challenge in trying to implement citizenship education [...]. The present curriculum guidance in both countries emphasises the duties and responsibilities of students to the school, the wider community and those in authority, but has much less to say about the reciprocal responsibilities of the school and the community towards students. [...] Schools need to recognise that in teaching the benefits of greater participation they must be open to allowing greater involvement of pupils in decision-making processes. This may, in turn, require some re-evaluation of both authority structures within school and current relationships between teachers, pupils and management teams. English and Romanian schools have developed in quite

different political cultures, but the day-to-day realities of power, how it is exercised and by whom, is strikingly similar. (ibid., 2000, p. 98)

They acknowledge the problem of the lack of clarity of what citizenship is intended to be. Another similarity between the two societies is the contradiction between the implications of equal status that is carried by citizenship and the profound inequalities encountered in the two societies. Social exclusions, reinforced by economic pressures are a serious challenge in both countries and the Citizenship curriculum does not offer clear guidelines on how to deal with, for instance, the situation generated by 'the persistent right-wing campaigns in Britain against migrants and the on-going hostility of Romanians to the Roma people' (ibid. p. 97). A final possible common feature can be found in the answer to the question 'of what are we citizens?':

Increasing globalisation means that we live a global community and Britons and Romanians will soon have EU citizenship in common. Yet the break-up of nation states and pressure on governments to cede power downwards to local level are testimony to the strengths of local and regional identity. (ibid. p. 97)

There needs to be a clearly stated aim in both societies in terms of curriculum to engage critically with these inter-connecting identities – local, regional, and national – as part of the debate on citizenship education, alongside their translation into classroom practice. However, this cannot be done without a consistent reference to a theoretical underpinning, for example, grounded in critical multiculturalism. This variant of critical multiculturalism is described by Smith (2003) as:

[...] a willingness to acknowledge inequalities between different groups in society. Similarities and differences between groups are acknowledged but the salient point is the recognition that different groups within society have different access to power and resources and that prejudice and discrimination are part of the social fabric. In educational terms critical multiculturalism places a value on acknowledging, understanding and challenging inequality and social injustice and this obviously takes it into more controversial areas. (p. 29)

In a recent comprehensive report by Kerr et al. (2004), *Making Citizenship Real*, a longitudinal survey of various practices used in teaching Citizenship, point to a continuity of previous practices in terms of multicultural education. I have found virtually no references in the schools surveyed by the report to any initiatives that would engage with issues relating to national identity or to place multicultural pedagogy within an open debate of how children think about their national group. Identity at the best was reduced to the level of community and the in-group used as reference was in most cases the local community, i.e. the neighbourhood, the locality, or the school itself.

Citizenship teaching in Romania has a mixed tradition. Until recently, it has been seen as little more than nationalist indoctrination (Verdery, 1991) and it has had a surprising continuity from at least 1918 up to the recent past. In 1918, the Kingdom of Romania had fulfilled the dream of creating Greater Romania (Diószegi and Süle, 1990) by skilfully incorporating territories with or without significant indigenous Romanian populations from all of its neighbours in the aftermath of the war and the dissolution of the Austro-

Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. The resulting state was vast and multinational, with numerous minorities relatively unhappy to live within the confines of the new state. The official policy of various governments, from the liberal democratic regime of the 1920s, to the authoritarian and later fascist dictatorship of the 1930s and after the Second World War, the Communist period, was to consolidate the national unity of the country. On one hand, this led to an active, nation-building discourse to create a monolithic, unitary nationhood, while on the other hand, it resulted in paranoia about the possible dissolution of the country due to the lack of loyalty of its minorities and revisionist ambition of its neighbours. A near total dissolution did occur during the years of the Second World War when Hitler and Stalin partitioned the country between themselves and their allies. After the war, some of the territories, notably Transylvania, were returned to Romania, but this further reinforced the already existing paranoia about another possible catastrophe that might befall the country. A heavily nationalistic discourse and repression of minorities occurred even during the internationalist ethos of the Soviet occupation of the 1950s. The nationalistic discourse attained its paroxysm during the 1980s (Verdery, 1991) and went beyond anything that has been attempted before.

Education, and more specifically the curriculum, were at the forefront of the indoctrination campaign, with every aspect of the curriculum having to make reference to patriotism and national identity, from kindergarten up to the baccalaureate, as I can personally recall from my experience of schooling between 1976 and 1989. After the end

of the Ceausescu regime in 1989, contradictory and chaotic reforms were introduced into the curriculum and during the first part of the 1990s, there was little change in the spirit or the ethos of education, except references to socialism were eliminated. The first coherent attempt to reform the education system was carried out through the Education Act of 1995, which was followed by a great number of additional acts and revisions. Within the new framework, a clear shift has been recorded from the extreme nationalist tone of previous curricula. The traditional subjects of patriotic or national education, History, Geography and Literature, have been liberated from openly nationalistic references and from the requirements placed on teachers. Although the introduction of the Education Act of 1995 itself, states in article 3, paragraph 1 that 'education aims to fulfil an ideal based on humanistic traditions, on democratic values and on the aspirations of Romanian society and contributes to the preservation of national identity' (my translation, MEN, 1998). This ambivalence is present throughout the entire curriculum, which potentially creates a number of problems. Due to the cultural practices of the Romanian education system which has a tradition of extreme centralisation, such guidance can be taken seriously by many in the teaching profession, despite the fact that the actual school curriculum has somewhat been cleansed, and continue to teach the old values of patriotism and national consciousness. Such a danger is further enhanced by the adoption of the new curriculum for civic education for secondary schools and high schools (Ministry of Education, Statutory Order no 4921/22.09.2003 and 4730/22.09.2004 respectively) which again, contains vague guidance regarding the need to educate children to understand their national identity.

The tradition of a lifetime and the absence of a general moral reappraisal of events and practices of the previous regimes (such as the de-Nazification of the Western Germany after the Second World War), are not conducive to a balanced and critical approach in discussing national identity in schools.

In many ways, the ideas promoted by the new civic education curricula are very positive and they focus on the realities of post-communist Romania (democracy, political plurality, free media, economic literacy, civic society, *et cetera*). However, the references to plurality and diversity in society are again given only a general framework, without any guidance towards discussing nationalism in the context of ethnic minorities or racism in the context of the Roma minority. In fact, no provisions at all are included regarding the need of the majority to learn about these groups. Again, I would tend to be highly pessimistic about the outcome of this policy, bearing in mind the lengthy decades of indoctrination and also the power of the hidden curriculum on the outcome of the teaching of citizenship values in Romanian schools.

In order to have the necessary tools to find remedies to such conundrums, it is necessary to find ways of understanding how national identity can contribute to the production of prejudice and what is the role of the education system in the process.

6. 'Nation', prejudice and education

Reviewing the literature on 'nation' and 'race', it became clear that there is a limited number of studies that explore these concepts within the context of childhood and education. The debate on citizenship and the resulting statutory subject, Citizenship Education, is being taught in schools at a later stage of children's intellectual formation and addresses only partially the issue of national identity formation in children. Little is known about how national identity is conceptualised by children and how they make use of the ensuing concepts in their later life. At the same time, there are a greater number of studies looking at the role that the curriculum can play in fostering various types of national identity and the political thinking behind the implementation of such curricula.

One of the few texts that explore in some depth this issue is Cullingford's (2000) *Children, National Identity and Prejudice*. Hence, I felt it would be productive to engage fully with ideas emerging from this book: however, Cullingford has a rather idiosyncratic approach to the matter, as his methods are largely empirical and with an interdisciplinary perspective that at times eludes a consistent framework. Nevertheless, there are a number of insightful ideas in his text and despite the methodological limitations, it is worthwhile accepting his heuristics in order to develop further an understanding of the development of national awareness in school children.

Cullingford locates the emergence of the concept of nation in three sites within the social and psychological development of children. He suggests that an unexplained psychological mechanism makes very young children become aware of the concept of difference between themselves and others. Then, the family becomes a ground for competition for various resources between the different members; finally, the school in its physical space is a reflection of the larger community with its barriers and dangers that will engrain ideas of in-group and out-group allegiances that underpin the concept of nation:

We have, then, three themes for understanding the development of prejudice. The first is the potential of observation, the ability, from an age when no one can explain it, to understand the points of view of others, and the untrustworthiness of those points of view. The second is the fact of relationships, the need for personal attention, for intellectual and not just emotional warmth. The family therefore is not only a source of the demonstration of human limitations, but a place of potential conflict, of rivalry and jealousy, of the desire to create a possibility of personal distinctiveness against others. The third strand is the translation of emotional hegemony into an environmental location; it is the outward manifestation of the instinct of space. Young children create their own understandings of the world in which they live. They have to make sense of the clues that come to them. From an early age this either enables them to embrace the possibilities of difference, of separate identities, or makes them narrow and defensive, against others rather than for them. (p. 69)

Presently, the teaching of Citizenship in schools is exploring various directions for future development, though national identity does not seem to be one of its preferred

directions. It is difficult to find an unmediated debate about nationhood, national identity and nationalism within the context of Citizenship classes and one has to look under various headings (political system, international politics, globalisation *et cetera*) to pinpoint references to 'nation'. Cullingford raises this point when he criticises the weaknesses of the National Curriculum in addressing the issue of 'nation':

In then various sources of information from talking to parents to watching television it is interesting to note that what should be the most significant source of all – school – is rarely mentioned. This has a lot to do with the fact that the subjects raised in the interviews, namely children's attitudes to themselves and the actual world, to their own environment and circumstances and to other countries, are just the subjects that schools do not deal with. The national curriculum is prescribed and covers many themes and consists of many levels, many of which are to be tested. But it contains little in the way of values or attempts to understand a democratic society, despite some attempts to add 'citizenship' to the curriculum. There are many skills involved in the curriculum, but hardly a mention of its purpose or of understanding. The one overlap between curriculum in school and children's views is geography – their knowledge of what other countries are like. This is the one time that the experience of school is involved. And yet for every mention of knowledge acquired in school there are many that cite nature programmes on television as the main source. Again, it is the pictures that stay in the mind, and when children describe in any detail the experience of people in foreign countries their awareness is more likely to come from nature programmes or documentaries than from school. (pp. 45-46)

In this context, he offers an original explanation for the appearance of a powerful national identity within the confines of schooling, though not in direct relation to

specific educational initiatives. He attempts to describe a complex mechanism that operates on several sites (in school, at home, in the neighbourhood) and integrates various influences (parents, teachers, mass media). This is mostly achieved through the negotiation of what he calls 'symbolic and real space':

Space is both real and symbolic. As in the imagined communities of nationalism, whereby people adhere to a sense of identity that connects them to countless anonymous others, space becomes a series of definitions against some outside world. Space is where people belong: a boundary that defines personal possession, like a room, a sense of self clearly separated from the shared neighbourhoods where conflicts can arise. Within the home there are rivalries over space. Outside the home the question is the extent to which there is some kind of hegemonic control over a defined sense of place which is known and safe. The place to which one belongs marks out the sense of personal and shared identity that is the extension of the categorisation of groups. Whilst schools in themselves both define and dislocate the sense of shared space, a sense of personal possession is already established. Boundaries of indoors and out, safe and dangerous places, places where threatening people live and those in which you are at home are all strongly pressed on the consciousness of children. (p. 63)

Physical boundaries are seemingly the essential element in creating group identities which children will take further in partitioning the surrounding world in simplistic dichotomies of 'us' and 'them', easily associated with 'good' and 'evil'. Nationality, for Cullingford, is a marker of children's own in-group and is a powerful catalyst for engendering prejudice:

The reason that children are so familiar with the concept of nationality is because they are aware of their own distinction in relation to other people. Children are self-conscious, defining themselves in phrases such as 'I am British'. They have a greater sense of both relativity and distinction. The very fact that they were born and live in a particular place is both arbitrary, a matter of chance, and an essential defining fact. They know that they would be different had they been born somewhere else. They appreciate the relativity of their circumstances. They find it perfectly feasible to imagine living somewhere else. They might be familiar with, or prefer what they are accustomed to, but this does not imply an immediate sense of superiority. At the same time they are defined as who they are in a group against the different characteristics of others. Whilst the sense of relativity smacks of benign nationalism, it can easily be manipulated in different ways. Any form of prejudice rests on a perception of the 'other'. (p. 162)

For Cullingford, prejudice is in many ways a natural development from the discovery of inherent difference between various groups in society. Prejudice becomes 'malign' through a whole range of exclusionary mechanisms into which children are socialised. In the 'benign' state, natural discrimination between members of in-groups and out-groups is left behind when power relations become unequal between the respective groups.

One of the problems with understanding the bases of nationalism, clearly an artificial construct according to particular cultural norms and propagandas, is the sense of inevitable, of some atavistic force that directs attention in a particular way. Similarly, racism appears to be constructed upon a narrow definition of obvious difference. But these are constructs; they are built upon a far more general attitude towards difference. They are lubricated by the distinctions between those who have power and those who do not. They are formed by the far more neutral

understandings of the way in which the social world operates. The social world has, of course, several levels of communication. There are verbal interactions at a variety of levels, but there is also the transaction of money. (p. 88)

This analysis inevitably leads back to a political question regarding what kind of citizenship society decides to promote. Inequality and exclusionary practices are more likely to produce the kind of prejudice that would react in a hostile manner to difference, while balanced power relations and inclusive practices would limit the development of prejudice and maintain it within 'benign' parameters. The teaching of Citizenship Education in schools, as it was pointed out in the section above dealing with Citizenship, can only be a reflection of the concept of citizenship at large.

Many of the issues raised by Cullingford are confirmed by other studies deploying a comparative methodology. Mummendey, Klink and Brown (2001), using social identity theory and a quantitative social-psychology methodology, established a clear link between national identification as in-group favouritism and the rejection of out-groups. Their comparative study, carried out in Germany and Britain, revealed a remarkable consistency of a positive national identification for in-groups and a devaluation of out-groups in the context of a comparison with other national groups. A similar comparative study conducted by Poppe and Linssen (1999) although on a much larger scale, reached similar conclusions (see Hopkins, 2001). They researched the content of national stereotypes held by adolescents from six Central and East European countries and in-group favouritism. This is nuanced by the hierarchy of national stereotypes

based on structural and relational features of nation states, such as perceived economic success or moral authority.

The school setting is also the preferred location for the formation of national identity as difference, for Gordon et al. (2000). They identify within the 'school' as a generic term for education, a symbolic spatial organisation on three levels: the official school, the informal school, and the physical school. The official school consists of the curriculum, the lessons, the formal hierarchies, and disciplinary apparatus; the informal school includes informal hierarchies, social interaction and various interpretations and application of rules; the physical school consists of spatiality and embodiment, both in the physical, material sense of the bodies of students and teachers and the architectural environment of the school. Identity is played out in this framework as a 'complex dance movement' (p. 65) constantly negotiated by all involved. Their study looks at a number of schools in London and Helsinki and addresses the issue of how a diverse, inclusive concept of citizenship can be negotiated within the actual and symbolic spatiality of the school. They see the school as responsible for the education of citizens in terms of their rights, duties and responsibilities, but also to produce these citizens within the nation state, familiar with the common culture, language, history, and joint sense of future. Schools are faced with a dual task: on the one hand, they are expected to exert regulation and control and reproduce social relations, while on the other hand to be sites of social change and emancipation, resulting in a constant tension between control and agency, regulation and emancipation (p. 88). The comparative character of the study is

illustrative of the differences in strategies in England and Finland, but also between various schools in the two societies.

In all these accounts symbolic spatiality becomes an essential element in the construction of national identity. This resonates with Anderson's (1994) idea of imagined communities, discussed above, as inhabiting a symbolic space designated as the living-space for the nation. Other elements, however, come into the equation alongside territory, such as language and consanguinity (Kellas, 1998), mythologisation of history and religion (McCrone and Kiely, 2000). Penrose (1993) has a three part construction of national identity: first, is the existence of a distinctive group of people defined in terms of tangible characteristics such as language or religion or cultural practices; second, is the assumption that such groups occupy or lay claim to a distinctive territory or place; and third, that a mystical bond is forged between people and place to form an immutable whole. For Cutts Dougherty et al. (1992) the conceptualisation of national identity can be related 'to three general topics of national interest: space (geographical), people (demographical), and souls (ideological)' (p. 815). These topics are central components of the social representation associated with a particular national identity, with greater or less emphasis and articulation given to each depending on the historical traditions of a society.

More recently, post-structuralist theories, with their emphasis on language, representation, and meaning, have been deployed to explore the emergence of the idea

of nation (Foucault, 1980). As Howard and Gill (2001) point out, a 'discursive construction of national identity and citizenship' (p. 88) functions in several *loci* in society. The media, the political machinery, commercial activities and of course the school, all contribute to a multifaceted discourse through which the nation is created. This resonates with Bhabha's (1994) idea of 'narrating the nation', in which stories are told and retold endlessly from various standpoints. In a similar way, the researcher will elicit a discourse from interviewed subjects. This discursive construction may help reveal the conceptualisation of national identity and may allow the possibility to trace it back (or not) to other competing, more powerful discourses.

Within the context of schools, the curriculum has been identified as performing a crucial role in setting the scene for influencing the creation of national identity. For example, Tomlinson (1996) underlies the close links between the official curriculum and national identity:

National identity is bolstered by facts and myths which are recorded in literature, art, science, technology and communication. Transmission of fact and myth via a school curriculum helps shape each generation's view of their national and cultural heritage. (p. 120)

In her view, the curriculum can be seen as a continuum, which at one extreme end can be ethnocentric, xenophobic, monocultural or racist, while at the other end can be open, pluralist, multicultural and anti-racist. Such a curriculum addresses the issues of the presence of minorities in society. Tomlinson (*ibid.*) argues that:

Education is undoubtedly *one* vehicle by which knowledge about minorities, intercultural relations, prejudices and ethnic antagonisms can be explicitly offered, the effects may be minimal if non-rational beliefs in white superiority still exist, together with the need to scapegoat minorities for economic and social ills. In historical circumstances in which a majority group recognises itself only through not-rational beliefs in cultural and 'racial' uniqueness and a refusal to acknowledge the valid presence of other groups, it is unlikely that members of the excluded groups will be accepted as equal citizens. (p. 129)

Coulby (1997) emphasises the crucial role the curriculum has in the attempts of the state to 'disguise itself as a nation' (p. 32) and also to serve as a powerful tool to control cultural reproduction. In his view, curriculum policies can and do reflect the policies of a bellicose political apparatus and the most recent example in this sense is the contribution by nationalist indoctrination in schools to the build-up to the war in the former Yugoslavia. For Coulby:

A national curriculum, taught in the national language and celebrating the national culture, informs young citizens that the nation and the state are one and the same. In fact, the state and its curriculum is parasitical on the dominant nation – Russian, English or Romanian – as they are predatory on the non-dominant – Chechen, Scottish or Magyar. Far from being identical as the modernist synthesis would have it, the nation and state are actually oppositional forces. This opposition most frequently takes linguistic and religious terms and, thus, involves educational institutions and practices. The further imposition of the Romanian language in the school and university system, implemented by the New Education Law (Government of Romania Public Information Department, 1995), is an example of educational institutions being used by the state for internal cultural imperialism. As amplified below this cultural imperialism is far from unopposed. In Europe this

opposition can all too frequently result in open conflict. Cultural conflict and resistance are often an early manifestation of emerging nationalism. In examining these conflicts it is necessary to consider the place of curricular systems within the state's resources of cultural reproduction. (p. 31)

This position of power of the curriculum is, however, not unchallenged. Parmenter (1999) in a study about the construction of national identity in Japan contrasts the official educational policy of the Ministry of Education with the accounts of students and student teachers. The results of the inquiry point towards a certain ambiguity in the outcome of the official policy, as some of the younger students embraced elements of the nationalistic official curriculum, while the student teachers espoused a more mixed, multicultural view of the world. This is a good indicator, as Parmenter points out, of the doubts about the efficiency of a centralised curricular policy in enforcing a particular vision of the nation, while many of the teachers in charge of the actual implementation do not subscribe to the same vision.

An interesting line of inquiry is to explore how the idea of nation is addressed in the context of British schooling within the Celtic fringe. Even before the process of constitutional devolution was put in place, a specific education system existed in Scotland and Wales, while Northern Ireland represented a completely different set of challenges. To varying degrees, the debate about national identity and education takes place in a different context than in England. With more consensus on national renaissance (Phillips, 1996a), an acceptable process of cultural restorationism takes place

within the curriculum, that benefits from a greater support from the local teaching community. In addition, for him 'Welsh cultural restorationism is a reaction to Anglocentric cultural restorationism. It gives expression to forms of cultural identity, which had been relegated for over a century and a half, and in the process, it restores cultural forms which had been oppressed by more dominant, hegemonic Anglocentrism (ibid. p. 394). Looking at the situation in Wales, Phillips (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1997) in a series of articles attempts to draw the line between the cultural restorationism in England as advocated by the New Right (Ball, 1990) and the practices of the Welsh Curriculum (*Curriculum Cymreig*). He argues that:

Any attempt to encourage particular forms of cultural expression through education is not without its tensions and potential difficulties, particularly if it seeks to define nation, nationhood and identity in the process [...]. An identification of these issues may have some theoretical utility for those education policy makers in Europe and the rest of the world currently engaged in debates involving the re-formalisation of the connection between curriculum, culture and the creation of national identities. (1996a, p. 386)

Such a curriculum expresses its Welshness in provisions about language teaching, the teaching of literature, history, inculcating 'a sense of place and heritage and a sense of belonging' (ibid., p. 394). The aims of such a curriculum are to create what Phillips calls 'informed citizens' (1996b) who are able to 'recognise and celebrate the fact that identity can be based not only in relation to nationhood and culture, but also gender, race, ethnicity, class, region, sexual orientation and so on' (ibid., p. 42). This curriculum needs to satisfy the following points, according to Phillips (1996b):

1. Produce citizens who have a properly informed perception of their own identity, as well as those of others
2. actively promotes an inclusivist as opposed to an exclusivist view of community, society and nation
3. a depth of vision which addresses the universal rather than the particular, a view of the world which looks outwards and inwards
4. an attitude of mind which has confidence to celebrate both the familiar and the less familiar
5. above all, a curriculum which recognises the reality of and encourages the cultivation of a multiplicity of potential identities. (p. 42)

There is a very fine line here between the two possible outcomes of such an attempt: an open, inclusive vision discussed by Phillips and the danger of sliding into some form of nationalism. He is aware of this possibility when he states the case for a resolutely multiculturalist approach to the curriculum:

Work conducted in England has highlighted the reactionary, inward-looking form which cultural restorationism there has taken, and this explains why it has been rejected by teachers. Cultural restorationism in Wales need not and should not be inward looking or parochial. Potential within the discourse provides the opportunity for the expression of particular aspects of Welsh identity through a wider cultural context. After all, the geopolitical entity which is Wales exists within a post-modern, global cultural marketplace, linked to the rest of the world through mass communication. Within this context, it is the heterogeneous, relativistic, multicultural dimensions of *Curriculum Cymreig*, rather than the quasi-nationalism which need to be asserted. (1996c, p. 35)

Phillips' perspective may have a particular validity to the situation in Romania. A number of similarities emerge: Romanian society is attempting to recapture a sense of identity after the collapse of 50 years of a totalitarian regime which imposed a number of artificial identities, from the Stalinist internationalism of the 1950s to the Maoist inspiration cult of personality of the Ceauşescu's 1980s, against the background of a paranoid nationalism (Tismăneanu 1999, Verdery, 1991). In many ways, the attempts to create a national identity after the collapse of the Communist regime resembled a nostalgic cultural restorationism which was trying to relive the glory days of the 1920s, the nationalistic elation after the creation of Greater Romania – but came into direct contradiction: firstly, with the similar restorationist agendas of ethnic minorities living in the country, and secondly, with the European integration process. A liberal, social-democratic democracy cannot be built on a nationalistic fantasy and contemporary realities even in Romania (such as racial and ethnic diversity, new migration *et cetera*) will bring forth a serious crisis. Instead of adopting a bellicose version of the national identity, I would be more reassured if something along the lines of Phillips' 'informed citizen' became the goal of educationalists in Romania, too.

The situation of Northern Ireland is clearly different from both the rest of the United Kingdom and Romania. Farren (1997) presents a review of the relationship between education and national identity in the Province, with particular reference to some recent curricular initiatives put in place in order to deal with the divisions in education. He has

identified a multi-focal debate within education policy circles. This debate can be seen as having two prime focal points:

The first can be described as curricular in its implications. It focuses on the manner in which communal identities are represented and studied within the curriculum and on how strategies for resolving the conflicts associated with them could be developed. The second is structural and addresses the question as to whether it is the separate, denominationally based school systems which are prime contributors to inter-communal conflict and, if so, whether they should be replaced by schools of a denominationally integrated kind. The focal points are not mutually exclusive, but, in practice, given the scale of denominational separation, answers to the first have been seen as offering more scope and indeed more hope for the immediate future. Answers to the second are to be seen in the growing, but as yet quite small, network of integrated primary and secondary schools across the whole of Northern Ireland. (ibid. p. 86)

Various experimental research projects have resulted in the introduction of two statutory cross-curricular themes: *Education for Mutual Understanding* and *Cultural Heritage* as part of the Northern Ireland Education Reform Order in 1989. The former is directed at 'encouraging cross-community contact, while the later is directed at increased understanding of the different traditions which inform cultural identity in Northern Ireland' (ibid., p. 88). For Farren, this approach to cultural heritage has had a significant impact on the content of curriculum. It has lead to an increased emphasis on studying Irish history, to the inclusion of local writers, local music and traditions in the school curriculum, as well the studying of the Irish language which is beginning to enjoy an enhanced status (ibid. p. 88).

Smith (2003) has carried out a more recent analysis of educational initiatives in Northern Ireland. He points to the limitations of the *Education for Mutual Understanding* and *Cultural Heritage* initiatives over the years, as they have failed to engage with controversial issues, mainly due to schools deciding to maintain engagement on a minimalist level. Smith believes that there is a need for a rethinking of such initiatives, especially as there is 'no consensus on nationality in Northern Ireland, or indeed the legitimacy of the state itself' so the concept of citizenship will also be 'problematic and contested' (p. 24). He argues that a citizenship education curriculum must go beyond simple patriotic modes, defined 'solely in terms of national identity and requiring uncritical loyalty to the nation state' (ibid. p. 24). Smith suggests a concept of citizenship based on rights and responsibilities rather than national identity, where emphasis on human rights, with a specific reference to children's rights can displace the determinism of culture, religion, or ethnicity. In practice, this concept of citizenship is an inquiry-based one as opposed to a knowledge-based and transmissional one, which cannot be established due to the lack of political consensus. He suggests that such an inquiry-based citizenship education depends upon four core areas:

1. Diversity and inclusion
2. Equality and justice
3. Human rights and social responsibilities
4. Democracy and active participation. (ibid. p. 26)

It may be suggested that, this type of curriculum could come into practice, if the underpinning educational philosophy adopted a critical multiculturalist position, as opposed to the separatist, monocultural reality of Northern Ireland.

The potential lessons for Romania are numerous: the respective communities live in more increased isolation than ever before and the knowledge of each other's cultures and traditions is uneven and unequal (Centrul de cercetare a relațiilor interetnice din Transilvania, 1998). Just as in Northern Ireland, integration of schools is not the preferred way forward, although for different reasons: the Communist regime conducted a deliberate policy of forced integration of education, involving processes of discrimination against the national minorities. Currently, for the surviving national minorities restoring their separate, if not entirely autonomous, education system, from kindergarten to university, is seen as an act of historic reparation and affirmation of equality (Gereben, 1999). A curriculum-based initiative, however, as suggested above by Farren, could lead to similar initiatives in exploring the cultural heritage of the various communities in Romania or at least in areas where these communities live together. This could have a significant impact on teaching the majority Romanian students about the cultural heritage, history, and language of national and ethnic minorities living amongst them, as at the moment only minority students have a statutory requirement to learn about the history of Romanians, Romanian language and literature. A certain degree of reciprocity might lead to an increased awareness amongst majority students about the situation of national and ethnic minorities, but also would reduce the minority students'

feeling of a unilateral and unfair imposition of having to learn about the culture of their Romanian majority peers. Smith's idea of an 'inquiry-based' curriculum for Citizenship education could be particularly useful as a form of praxis in the context of Romanian schools, where neither students nor teachers have been used to any form of autonomous questioning or contestation of statutory knowledge.

Looking at the case of Scotland, Adams (1997) analyses the situation of the Scottish education system and attempts to establish whether at that moment there is in place a Scottish national curriculum as in the rest of the UK. He singles out two arguments that would support the need of some sort of nationally co-ordinated strategy for a curriculum initiative that would address the issue of national identity. One argument is that Scottish culture is seen to be under threat from several directions: the tendency towards marginalisation of small European cultures, the cultural competition with the rest of United Kingdom, and finally, the effects of globalisation of popular culture. Adams argues that 'Scotland is not alone in having a rich national culture threatened by the power of the media and multi-national commercial organisations' (p. 73). This clearly represents a dilemma and a significant challenge for schools:

Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect that schools can stem this powerful imperialism and hold the line of the high water mark of Scottish language and the arts. [...] in the broader context of the internationalisation of children's experience through the media we may have to accept diversity of a different kind. Children have to feel that the experience of life that they bring to school can be accepted and built upon rather than rejected if they are to flourish and develop and schools therefore will

have to find ways of making the Scottish perspective on that experience enriching and exciting. (ibid. p. 73)

His second argument is that Scottish history and culture are more often than not presented in a distorted and caricatured manner, abundant with Hollywood clichés. The example Adams provides is the '*Braveheart*' phenomenon and the subsequent effort of teachers to offer 'an accurate version of that particular piece of Scottish history' (ibid. p. 72.). Adams acknowledges the difficulty faced by such a curriculum: how to be at the same time a Scottish national curriculum and take into account children's various experiences, while preparing them for the 'complex definitions and demands that are presented by the post-modern society that is Scotland, as it moves towards the next century' (ibid. p. 73).

Grant (1997a) addresses the issue of multicultural education in Scotland and states that 'multicultural education in Scotland is [...] an important matter for all Scots; and since Scots are themselves a minority within a multinational state as well within the wider international community, it follows that Scottish identity is a legitimate concern along with the identity of minority groups' (p. 138). Scotland would have a better chance of understanding its own identity if it is considered in the context of the multicultural complexity of its own society and the wider international context, rather 'than in continuous and constricting obsession with one large and powerful neighbour' (ibid. p. 138). The practical features of this multicultural education, in Grant's account, points

towards the recognition of minority languages and their usage and a positive acceptance in matters of religious observation of cultural diversity. He argues for:

the languages of minority groups to be available for educational use and to be accorded status and respect within the educational system' [...]. In matters of religion (and associated questions of dress, diet, customs etc.) it is not enough to *tolerate* diversity, to accept deviations from majority norms as a necessary nuisance (though that is better than nothing). What is needed is a positive acceptance of diversity and its recognition within the *structure* of the system. (ibid. p141 – author's emphasis)

Grant concludes with a powerful defence of multicultural education in the context of contemporary Scotland that is worth quoting in full as it has potential application for the situation in contemporary Romania.

No one can deny that there are and will be severe problems, but unless they are addressed we are condemning thousands of our fellow-citizens to damaging their identity at best, alienation and discrimination at worst; and we are also depriving the majority of young Scots of the opportunity of learning to live in a world of diverse nations and cultures, with confidence in their own identity as well as respect of that of others. There is a chance – just a chance – that a multicultural Scottish educational system can help Scotland discover itself, and escape from the twin dangers of inferiority complex and truculent jingoism, the oscillation between bombast and cringing that is our national curse, the outcome of centuries of preoccupation with the culture (or at least the power and prestige) of one neighbour rather than looking more clearly at itself and the world beyond the Channel and the North Sea. Looked at in this way, multicultural education is an opportunity that our country cannot afford to let pass. (ibid. p. 143)

Many of the above arguments relating to national identity, multiculturalism and education have powerful resonance for Romania: Romania will also soon become a minority culture within a multinational European Union and it should attempt to understand its own identity in a multidirectional relationship between international, European, and internal confluences. Assimilating or eliminating its national and ethnic minorities is not acceptable anymore (as Romania has already lost its Jewish minority through the Holocaust and later through emigration, and its German minority has recently become unviable after deportations in the 1950s and recent voluntary emigration). Granting equal status and parity of esteem to minority languages and cultures in education must be acknowledged as not only beneficial to the respective minorities, but to the majority itself: besides being an enriching experience, it can help the majority come to terms with the perspective of itself being a minority in a European and global context.

In attempting to understand how children conceptualise national identity, a productive tool might be built upon the various representations that have been discussed by the above studies in terms of theoretical positions and empirical work. It becomes clear that a constant range of elements may play a central role in the construction of national identity: place/space, language/discourse, recognition/in-group, difference/out-group. Such a series of concepts can be synthesised from previous inquiries and then deployed to create a nexus of points for an inquiry about children's conceptualisations in their thinking and talking about national identity.

In a series of studies, Carrington and Short (1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999) have researched how children of various ages in locations ranging from England, Scotland and America think about national identity. The studies were carried out in the aftermath of the New Right's campaign of 'cultural restorationism' (Ball, 1990), when traditional progressive values in education were under unprecedented attack and an aggressive nationalism was promoted as the means to re-establish the cohesion and unity of the nation. Similar processes were undergoing in the United States, too. Carrington and Short set out to test to what extent these policies and their result, the National Curriculum, have influenced children's beliefs. Their research explored in great detail the nature of conceptualisations used by children to view themselves and their in-groups, to formulate value-judgements about the membership of the in/out-groups and the fixity or permeability of group boundaries. More specifically, their inquiry around national identity focused upon Britishness as constructed by the nostalgic discourse of the Right and its attendant implications of a monolithic, monocultural vision impacting on the relations between various components of a contemporary multiethnic and multicultural society. The findings were encouraging as only a very small number of children had internalised exclusivist viewpoints or essentialist conceptualisations of identity. The children's perspectives were informed by a pluralistic vision, where official variants of Britishness or overtly nationalistic or patriotic convictions had little influence.

The present study is largely based on the inquiries carried out by Carrington and Short, as both the research questions and the methodology seemed to be appropriate to my own interest in exploring this field of inquiry. I have adopted the main research question – how do children conceptualise national identity?-, alongside the research methods – comparative case studies and semi-structured interviews. I have adapted their questionnaire used for data collection and I have followed some of the analytical methods used, that is, discourse analysis, in which such categories as abstract or concrete concepts were seen as very productive in establishing the nature of national identity of the samples. More positively, building on Carrington and Short's work enabled me to develop my own contribution to this field of inquiry. This development, in terms of my selection of methods and the rationale behind them, as well as their limitations, are explored critically in the next chapter.

8. Conclusions

The literature review has attempted so far to bring together various instances of a quest for the most suitable theoretical framework in trying to understand the formation of national identity within schools and amongst children. It also became apparent that there are a number of constraints on locating the most adequate framework within a very heterogeneous body of literature, as there is little or no overlap between the various fields that would present a deep engagement with any of the aspects sought out in this research. Political theory would present a great range of theoretical explanations

regarding the nature and historical evolution of national identity, but would only make fleeting references to education outside the greater political picture (see Anderson 1994, Kedourie 1996 and Smith 1986 & 1999). Schooling is considered on the 'macro' level as one of the preferred mechanisms of nation building policies, but is not analysed at the 'micro' or internal level in how the actual processes of creating/acquiring a national identity takes place.

However, the political structure does inform policy within education, at the level of schooling and research. In the more general context of sociology, emphasis can be placed on aspects other than nationhood, like the post-war decades in Britain, when race and ethnicity took precedence in debates around identity and disadvantage in research and education, over national identity. In Eastern Europe there was a powerful discourse emphasising the internationalism and solidarity of world proletariat, while national identity was considered an expression of bourgeois subjugation (see Tismăneanu 1993). Still, educational policies in most Communist states inculcated a powerful sense of national identity and patriotism in schoolchildren by means of curricular policies that were in apparent contradiction with official policy lines. The absence of engaging with the issues of national identity seems to have characterised both the field of educational policy and educational research in both countries. In Britain, the intellectual focus was for a long time directed towards the development of theoretical and practical aspects of anti-racist and multiculturalist politics within education. Inevitably, national identity was part of these debates, but has never been considered a central element and quite

often was reduced to an ancillary position in respect to race, legacy of the Empire, multicultural practices etc. Whether constructed as a negative concept or left out of the debate, national identity formation at the level of children did rarely figure within research.

Recent developments in the United Kingdom resulted in an invigoration of the debate about national identity within the devolved nations on the Celtic fringe. Also, the introduction of statutory Citizenship Education in schools will logically result in engendering an inquiry into the nature and formation of national identity amongst school children. It is not yet the case, but recent events have brought to the forefront a generalised preoccupation with collective identity and this will find its way into the classroom eventually.

Other ways of exploring the formation of national identity have approached the matter from a more psychological point of reference, notably from the field of social psychology. Cullingford (2000) uses concepts borrowed from social psychology such as prejudice, in-group, and out-group in casting a comprehensive regard on the formation of national identity. However, he links national identity to the development of prejudice and as such, it is rather reductive and negatively charged. A one-dimensional conception of national identity – or any form of identity – is bound to be vulnerable to contemporary critiques that would consider identity as highly contextualised and flexible. Cullingford's analysis is groundbreaking as it is one of the very few that clearly

link together national identity and childhood in a substantial study, but some of his conclusions are rather speculative, just as his methodology can be at times heterogeneous.

Bridging the gap between these two positions – political and sociological on one hand, and psychology led on the other – are number of smaller scale studies that have attempted to look at how children think about national identity and how this can impact on policy and policy making in the field of the development of more inclusive educational practices. Carrington and Short (1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999) in a series of studies have looked at the range of concepts children use in talking about national belonging and inclusion. They have identified a range of markers that the children would recognise and reproduce while trying to articulate their conception of nationhood. In similar studies Howard and Gill (2001), and Parmenter (1999) attempt to find out what children mean by being Australian and respectively Japanese. All these studies present children with a set of *a priori* concepts and the research actually measures the attitudes of the interviewed subjects to these concepts. This procedure is quite productive in shedding light on the typology of national identity appropriated by the children, and could inform policy and practice on the degree of inclusiveness of the respective visions of the nation.

There is a need to build up research methodologies that can inquire about how exactly national identity is produced, what are the intimate mechanisms involved and what

social stimuli have the crucial role in fostering national identity. The challenge comes from developing a neutral probing that would not refer to pre-existing concepts and, if such concepts are utilised, they should be constantly checked against the meaning ascribed to them by the interviewed subjects.

Also, it should be kept constantly in mind that national identity cannot be expressed in an isolated form, without making reference to other markers of identity, such as class, economic status, gender, geographic location *et cetera*. All these will be present in a dynamic interplay in circumscribing national identity to various degrees. National identity and the way children conceptualise it cannot be separated from other aspects of their identity as perceived during and contextualised by the interviewing process itself. Such methodological challenges are accompanied by a need for political neutrality, or at least an initial suspension of political motivation in carrying out the research, while the findings can and should be utilised within a political context.

METHODOLOGY

1 Introduction

This chapter has two inter-related purposes. Firstly, to locate my research within a specific methodological tradition, that of a critical perspective. Sociologically, the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt was a major contributor to the development of critical theory (Horkheimer, 1993). The Institute theoretically situated itself against positivism, which was seen as translating human relationships into abstract categories, thus failing to address the contextual and historical conditions in which they develop. Rather, they argued that science, knowledge production, and social/political interests were intimately linked (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979). Feminist theorists, among other anti-oppressive scholars, have developed critical theory methodologically to explore power relations (Lather, 1991; Bell et al., 1993). For example Griffiths (1998, pp. 35-36) has argued that:

Methodology is of particular importance in research about human beings.... Educational research is always on/for/with other people – and getting knowledge on/for/with other people is a complex matter. It is complex for three reasons: human agency; social relation, especially the effect of power; and ethics. The terms “agency”, “power” and “ethics” indicate that these questions are particularly significant for educational research for social justice, which is directly concerned with power, empowerment and the good of communities and individuals.

Secondly, the chapter provides a detailed examination of the data collection and how the research was carried out. My empirical study is primarily concerned with how younger secondary school children (10-11 year-olds) conceptualise national identity. I did not begin with this research problem, but developed it as a result of my methodological concern with interrogating the pupils' perspectives of national identity (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Before examining the methodological and data collection considerations and techniques I adopted to meet the theoretical and substantive issues, I shall describe how I arrived at the present research problem.

1.1 Initial research problem

Young (1971, pp. 1-2) referring to Seeley's (1966) valuable distinction between the 'making' and 'taking' of research problems, claims that English sociologists in earlier periods tended to 'take' the educators' problems and, by failing to make explicit their assumptions, took them for granted. Young argues that sociologists should:...'make his (sic) own problems, among which may be to treat educators' problems as phenomena to be explained; this is not to criticise earlier sociological research, but to ask what implicit assumptions led some questions...to be asked and others ... to be treated as given' (ibid.). This concern with methodological procedure was an important element of the emergence of what was referred as the 'new sociology' of education, within which Young was working. More recently within a UK context, it has been of central importance to the cultural politics of difference, which problematises the lack of

methodological rigour of materialist accounts of racism, ethnicity, and nationalism (Rattansi and Westwood, 1994). It was an inadequacy with which I began my study, by 'taking' the dominant explanation, shared by researchers, official reports, and teachers, of pupils' understanding of national identity. The substantive issue focused primarily on the pupils and methodological and data techniques were employed to meet the limiting assumptions of existing approaches to how children deal with difference.

As indicated above, the empirical research was conducted in two different locations, as an attempt to establish a comparative perspective on national identity formation among children in secondary education (Hantrais and Mangen, 1996). The choice of two different sites generated a number of methodological issues along the way. The first major issue was to establish a valid reason for the comparison itself. The two locations are different at a number of levels, such as historical, social and economical contexts, while at the same time, there are significant cultural differences that might make such a comparison hard to sustain. Setting up a research methodology for two such different contexts presents a major philosophical difficulty, as it is clear that I am not comparing like with like (Broadfoot, 2000; Grant, 2000; Novoa and Yariv-Marshall, 2003). This complexity began to emerge as I observed the English children within the school and the local community in which I was carrying out my empirical work. The latter, informed by my reading of diverse literatures on late modernity identities, served to shift the original formation of my research focus (Rattansi and Westwood, 1994; Davis, 1993; Connolly, 1998b).

1.2 Present research problem: epistemological focus on the pupils

The initial starting point of the research project was an attempt to understand how the educational system in the United Kingdom produces an inclusive, non-bellicose national identity as opposed to the flag-waving, aggressive nationalism promoted by the schools in Romania, and how the UK model might inform the reform of the educational system in Romania. As outlined in the introduction, as a result of my early reading of the literature and initial carrying out of empirical work, the inquiry had become more complex, as I realised the limits of a simple comparison that assumed a fixed understanding of national identity within very different societies. I found that the situation in the United Kingdom was more complex, at conceptual, political, and epistemological levels.

Earlier educational theorists, focussing upon young people's strategies within schools, have argued that within research, methodology has a relative autonomy, and that however important theoretical and substantive issues are, they do not completely determine methodology (Woods, 1983; Pollard, 1987a; Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 1998). In my own research, adopting a qualitative perspective, the privileging of pupils' epistemological position raised a number of complexities for my comparative study, emphasising the significant differences between the two nationally based samples. For example, there were major differences around the Romanian and English children's conceptualisations of national identity and ethnicity, and the differential access to

vocabulary they have to talk about these issues. In Romanian schools, children have a vast and rich vocabulary to talk about nation, nationality, ethnicity and cultural difference, and are socialised into discourses of nationalist domination, but they have little access to critical discourses to begin to open up the concept of national belonging. In contrast, the pupils in the English school I researched had a limited range of both concepts and vocabulary relating to national identity. A further issue was that it became clear that *national identity*, as a single category, was not sufficient in trying to make sense of young people's emerging perception of contemporary citizenship (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993). The children in the North East of England illustrated that identity in this context was a much richer tapestry, combining a whole range of inter-weaving identity positions, in terms of cultural and social identifications through language, regionalism, gender, consumerism *et cetera* (Woodward, 2000; Archer, 2003). In order to reflect this complexity, a central concern of the whole research process became the authenticity of the voices of the researched subjects and how this could be represented through the various processes involved here (Maylor, 1995).

A further major difference, with methodological implications for a comparative study, was in relation to policy development around issues of national identity, cultural difference, and modern citizenship. In England, discussion of national identity is not only relegated to the periphery of public discourse, but also is often conducted in abstruse and complex terms. Furthermore, while the Romanian educational authorities have produced significant amounts of guidelines and materials for teaching about

national identity, until very recently (2000), the National Curriculum in England has excluded this subject. (The teaching of Citizenship was just being introduced as I carried out my empirical work, so I did not have the opportunity to conduct any research or evaluation of it.)

In short, the chosen methodology was highly productive in developing a critical location from which I could reflexively engage with a comparative study of national identity formation among children in Romania and the United Kingdom (Hantrais and Mangen, 1996). The latter operating within late-modernity conditions has had a more profound and intense exposure to such cultural phenomena as multiculturalism, anti-racism and the multiplicity of interconnecting social categories, such as class and gender alongside questions of globalisation, consumption and regionalism (Brah et al., 1999a). Hence, I began to rethink my thesis in terms of how the UK's attempted solutions to solving the ensuing issues might become a source for helping to reform curriculum policy in Romania, that would incorporate a modernised mode of citizenship underpinned by a critical multi-culturalism (May, 1999). Most importantly, this brought me back to explicitly engage with critical theory and its promise to open up research, in a move away from a positivist search for universal truths to be applied in diverse national contexts, with which I began my study, to a need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the conceptual and political importance of the impact of historical contexts, social meanings and diverse knowledges in which individual and collective subjects make sense of questions of national identity and how we live with

difference. The last two sentences appear to contain a contradiction, making a claim to wish to use the experiences of one society to reform another society's education system and wider civil society, while at the same time stressing the historical, cultural and political specificity of each (local) national space. Indeed this is a major tension for contemporary social and cultural theory, such as post-structuralism and post-colonialism, that as a Romanian from a more traditional intellectual milieu, I have found difficult to come to terms with. In other words, my research methodology has contributed to the next stage of my academic journey.

My apprenticeship into carrying out empirical research did not result, however, in a simple inversion of exchanging quantitative for qualitative methods. Rather, I adopted a more methodologically hybrid position, as suggested by Bryman (1993) in his text *Quantity and Quality in Social Science Research*. Within an overall (philosophically-based) methodological paradigm, with its emphasis on cultural context, meanings and understandings, like Lacey (1976, p. 60), I have found it useful to deploy both qualitative and quantitative methods (techniques). More recently, Gorard with Taylor (2004) have spoken of all research, across the disciplines, having an over-arching logic and that a combination of methods is highly productive. This enabled me to develop a productive tension in carrying out empirical research of combining the inferring of meanings by understanding the context, alongside quantifiable elements and their positivistic rigour. On the one hand, the qualitative research paradigm may be practised as an exercise in the use of the sociological imagination (Mills, 1970, p. 12), that enabled me to bring into

focus the three-dimensional social world of (auto)biography, culture and history. This was of primary significance as I used my own educational biography as a point of departure for this study. On the other hand, quantitative methods have specific strengths in terms of precision, rigour and verifiability and replicability. (Bryman and Crammer, 1994; Black 1999). This was of specific importance to me because of my major aim in the study to make some limited generalisation about similar cases (Bassey, 1999) (see below).

1.3 The research process

I decided that the most suitable method of enquiry for carrying out the research was a case study approach (Burgess, 1995; Hammersley, 1999). This chapter details the rationale for my selection of this as the most appropriate method, how I used the case study, what its limitations were, and how I attempted to overcome them. As the research was set up in two different societies, across several sites, the research methodology had to be adapted to face the unforeseen challenges that might occur during the data collection processes. I constantly had to balance this need for adaptability and flexibility with the need for intellectual coherence and consistency of the methodology. As the study was set up as a comparative research project, this dilemma became quite apparent in the differences between how data was collected in the different sites. The coherence of the study was maintained by what Stakes (2000) calls a case study made up of a collection of cases, while the consistency was assured by

the flexibility of semi-structured interviews (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Archer, 2003) as the main data gathering technique. The next section of the chapter deals with how semi-structured interviews were deployed within the study and explains the methodological issues that were raised by the attempt to set up a comparative paradigm in conducting research across several different locations in two different societies. Following this, I present the ethical considerations that guided me through the stages of the data collection process, bearing in mind that the focus of the research involved children's perspectives, which carried with it a number of specific ethical issues (Pollard, 1987b; Epstein 1993; Lewis and Lindsay, 2000).

There were three distinct stages in conducting the empirical work in the research. The first was the pilot study that was carried out in a school in inner city Newcastle. After this was concluded, I reconsidered many elements of the data collecting process and I implemented improvements for the second stage. This occurred in Romania, in two schools in the city of Cluj, and resulted in a considerable volume of interview data that was analysed. (The study in England constituted the third stage and is examined below). In the next section, I detail the analytical procedures before presenting the setting and the preliminary analysis of the fieldwork in Romania.

I decided to include here as elements of the analysis the results of the observation process that developed in parallel with the interviewing. These observations were included in the section detailing the data collection in the two societies. I decided to

write up the story of the fieldwork as a narrative account (Bassey, 1999) and integrated here are those observations that I considered relevant for the nature of the enquiry. The section dealing with the study in Romania tells the story of the research, beginning with the choice of the sites and how access was negotiated, description of the schools, through observation, how the interviews were conducted and, following this, a presentation of the interview schedule that was used during the interviews. I conclude with some critical reflections about this stage of the work, as it became clear that some changes were needed in order to improve the quality of the data at the next stage of the data collection.

The section dealing with the study in England, the third stage, follows largely the same structure, beginning with a description of the research site, the process of gaining access, then how I was positioned in the school, followed by a more detailed account of the relevant observations of life in the school. It continues with the description of the interviewing process and a presentation of the interview schedule used for these interviews.

2 Case study as a research method

As indicated above I considered that the issues of interest would be best explored through an approach based mainly on a qualitative paradigm that combined qualitative and quantitative methods (Burgess, 1984; Bryman, 1993). I came to this conclusion after

considering the purpose of the study, the size of the sample and the nature of the research questions. A relatively small-sized sample made it difficult to construct a valid quantitative inquiry that could claim to have statistical representation (Walker, 1985). In addition, the nature of my research required a greater degree of flexibility and adaptability for an in-depth inquiry than would be possible with the more rigid framework of quantitative approaches. On a more practical level, there is a tradition of using case studies in educational research that goes beyond the intrinsic advantages of the method itself and emphasises the limits of feasibility for a study carried out by a researcher on his/her own, within a limited span of time and with minimal resources, as pointed out by Johnson (1994) and Bell (1997). The flexibility offered by case studies allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation, and to attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work. Consequently, the picture that emerges is more nuanced, compared with the generally one-dimensional approach of quantitative surveys.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define a case study as 'a detailed examination of one setting or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event' and I found this definition particularly helpful for the context of my study. I realised that the schools I was researching present themselves as fairly idiosyncratic, due to their specific ethnic, social and geographic context, more in tune with an idea of 'one setting' and 'one subject'. Thus, the limitation emerging from the schools chosen as the settings for the study were not necessarily representative of other schools at a national level was

overcome by the specific strengths of the case study method as a study of singularities conducted in depth in natural settings (Bassey, 1999).

I was constantly concerned with the problem arising from the dissimilarity of the chosen sites, while trying to build up a valid argument for the coherence of the study. Nevertheless, according to Stenhouse (1985), in a case study, the relationship between a collection of cases may superficially resemble a sample, and any population in which similar meanings or relationships may apply, is essentially a matter of judgement. In the light of this argument, I believe that it is possible to build up the study around the two schools in Romania and the school in the Northeast of England.

The concept of case study as comparison is suggested by Stake (2000), who argues that 'a case study is a process of discovery learning – how we learn from the singular case is related to how the case is like and unlike other cases' (p. 436). By using three different settings within two societies, the problem of connection of meaning within the rationale or the findings seemed to be one of the more fundamental questions around the validity of the whole research. If the comparison between the different settings, interviews, or findings becomes an interplay of similarities and dissimilarities, the process of 'discovery learning' Stakes refers to could stand at the heart of this study.

Due to the wide number of accounts about case studies as a research method, it was difficult to find one definitive typology within which to locate my own work. Bogdan

and Biklen (1982) suggest one categorisation of case studies where what I intended to do is considered an 'observational' case study, due to its concern with a contemporary location. On the other hand, Stakes (2000) presents a different typology, where, I believe my study fits in the category of the collective case study, being the study of a number of different cases. These cases may have similar or dissimilar characteristics, but they are chosen in order that theories can be generated about a larger collection of cases. At the same time, my study also has certain aspects of the intrinsic case study (where the case is worthy of study in its own right) and of the instrumental case study (where it seeks understanding beyond the case itself).

Before addressing the stage of theory generation, however, there needs to be clarity around the inherent limitations of case studies as a research method (Burgess, 1984; Bryman, 1993). Case study is a part of scientific methodology, but its purpose is not limited to the advance of science. Single or a few cases are poor representations of a population of cases and questionable grounds for advancing grand generalisation. The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case, as Stake (2000) argues. This statement encapsulates the essence of the problems around case study as a research method. Roizen and Jepson (1985) suggest a range of limitations involved in the case study method and, in line with many other researchers, they point out that generalisability has been seen traditionally as a major obstacle. The questions that need to be answered are whether it is externally valid or generalisable (i.e. the problem of sampling, if the size of the sample will allow any claims to representativity)

and whether it is internally valid (i.e. the problem of instrumentation: how does the observer/researcher affect the case being studied? To what extent are the researcher's observations and subsequently interpretations theory and value laden?) I acknowledge, as I suggested above, that the size of my samples in both Romania and England precluded claims to statistical representation.

The problem of validity and reliability of the research can be enhanced by making all case records available to public scrutiny in order to allow replicability. But the validity of the study is more likely to emerge from what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call trustworthiness, that is, 'respect of truth' that can be achieved by satisfying the reader that the research and analytical methods were appropriate and ethical, and the way the data has been analysed, interpreted and reported live up to generally accepted standards. Thus, validity would be internal rather than based on quantitative claims towards external generalisations.

Also, I am fully aware of the possible distortions around instrumentation, as I will point out further on that I felt that, for instance, the reaction of the pupils in the English school was influenced by the fact that I was a 'foreigner', possibly the first one with whom they had talked. With reference to interpretation, I realise that my interpretation will reflect both my academic and my life history, and hence such a reading is one of many possible alternative accounts (Clandinin and Connelly, 1999). Roizen and Jepson (1985) point out that an important advantage of a study of cases is that the richness of the material

facilitates multiple interpretations by allowing the reader to use his or her own experiences to evaluate the data and thus the research serves multiple audiences.

As long as the study satisfies the established criteria of public verification, that is, availability of the case record for critical examination, and gives all the necessary information for a possible replication, the number of interpretations can be equal with the number of readers, as Eco (1990) suggests when talking about the limits of interpretation for narrative texts. Essentially, a case study results in a narrative, as Stakes (2000) maintains, with researchers using the method to learn enough about their cases to encapsulate complex meanings into finite reports – and thus to describe the cases in sufficient descriptive narratives so that readers can vicariously experience these happenings and draw conclusions (which may differ from those of the researcher).

The data collection for my case studies included some of the items suggested by Wellington (1996) in an inventory of techniques pertaining to case studies. First of all, observation – simple observation (passive unobtrusive observation, for example, of language use; behaviour, surroundings, teaching materials, the physical infrastructure of the school) revealed a considerable array of data that helped elucidate the context in which the interview subjects were experiencing schooling. The major source of data was the interviews with pupils, but useful additional information was obtained from observation, the use of documents and records produced by the school (Burgess, 1995).

The aim of the study is not to make generalisations on a large scale. It would be contrary to the nature of case studies as studies of singularities. Bassey (2001) makes the point that only a weaker claim can be made in a 'fuzzy generalisation' around the validity of the findings in other contexts. A 'fuzzy generalisation' is one that is neither likely to be true in every case, nor likely to be untrue in every case: it is something that *may* be true. Fuzzy predictions with best estimates-of-trustworthiness may provide a useful tool for communicating with potential users of the findings, as it does not go beyond offering possible future predictions for cases similar where if x is present, then y *may* result (Bassey, 2001).

The difficulty with Bassey's typology in relation to empirical educational research is the similar to that encountered above: studies fit more than one category and have features that are characteristic of more than one type of case study. The idea of 'fuzzy generalisations' would normally lead to generating research outcomes as predictions leading to theory building, while outcomes seen as interpretations would not necessarily lead to theory, but to 'stories' (that is, narrative-analytical accounts) or pictures (that is, descriptive-analytical accounts) (Bassey, 1999, p. 4). He later on refers to examples of 'mixed' case studies, where more than one type is used in each case. My research fits in such a 'mixed' typology, as first of all the outcomes would be seen as interpretations, within an analytical account that is both descriptive and narrative. But also I attempted to conclude from these accounts that there is a basis to make some limited generalisation about similar cases (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

3 Using semi-structured interviews as a research method

Within the case studies, the most important method of data collection was the interview and the option was in favour of a semi-structured interview technique. The choice was motivated by the fact that it was going to be a small-scale research, involving a limited number of pupils to be interviewed. Semi-structured interviews can yield a variety of kinds of information, can gather factual information, and explore in some depth experiences, motivations and reasoning of the interviewees (Drever, 1995 p. 1). Semi-structured interviews allow a great degree of flexibility for the interviewer within the limits of a set of basic questions, helped by a number of probes and prompts, and it provides a linguistic space for the research participants to articulate their own perspectives on the social world (Walford, 1998). Such interviews are direct interventions, which is the source of both its advantages and disadvantages as a research technique: one advantage is that it allows greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection, while a disadvantage can be found in the fact that it is prone to subjectivity on the part of the interviewer (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 272). Such open-ended questions encourage conversation, co-operation, and help to establish rapport, and also permits the clearing away of misunderstandings.

The first step in carrying out my empirical work was to prepare a clear interview strategy as Gorden (1975, p. 177) explains: 'Strategy involves making decisions that determine the social-psychological setting of the interview. Strategy determines the plot,

(interview purpose or objectives), the scene (time, place and the definition of the situation) and the cast. (who is to be interviewed?)'. Taking into consideration both the advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews, I constructed an interview schedule which was first used for the pilot study. At this stage, the questions were shorter, simpler and fewer and the interviewing process itself was more rigid. During the second phase of the research, that is the data collection in Romania, the interview schedule developed significantly from the one used for the pilot: more questions were added, the questions themselves were more elaborate, and during the interviewing process more probes and prompts were used. I was more self-confident in the context of a Romanian school, as I was familiar with the curriculum being taught and consequently with the extent of the vocabulary pupils have or the concepts they are able to understand. This was reflected in the way in which the interviewing process was more focused and result oriented.

During the third phase of the research, that is, the data collection in England, I had already accumulated productive experiences in using the interview technique, which manifested itself mainly at a technical level: however, I was faced with the problem of not being familiar with English pupils' vocabulary and conceptual development within the age group with whom I was conducting my research. In this third phase of the data collection, my confidence increased and I attribute this partly to the fact that I discovered how flexible and adaptable the method of semi-structured interviewing actually was. This enabled me to use the interview schedule in a much more flexible,

creative manner and engage in interviews during which I gained a wide range of pupil accounts, but also to gently uncover the limits of the pupils' vocabulary and concept inventory. This meant that although the same basic questions were used during the whole research period and during each of the phases (pilot study, Romanian and English fieldwork), at this stage I allowed myself a much greater flexibility in the wording or ordering of the questions. The interview was allowed to flow and often after the children responded to my questions, the discussion continued freely. Within this context, the role as interviewer was most often passive in my attempt to structure the interview situation. 'Structuring the interview situation' refers to one of the first phases of the interview strategy, as Gorden (1975, p. 263) comments:

'...from the moment the interviewer first contacts the respondent through to the opening question of the interview. In presenting oneself to the respondent, what is said is significant mainly in helping the respondent crystallise his perception of the interviewer's role.'

My methodological stance has evolved during the process of data collection, facilitated by the reflective nature of the interview methodology. As Gleeson and Mardle (1987 p. 123) argue: 'The researcher must examine as closely as possible the assumptions which informed his or her initial methodological stance and how in the course of the study they became modified. One does not start, therefore, from what should be done, but from what was done.' Though there were changes in the way the interviews were conducted, in the phrasing of the interview schedule, and in the amount of additional talk outside the interview, I believe that the essence of the inquiry remained unchanged.

As I was studying what Stakes (2000) calls a 'collection of cases', there were bound to be some differences in 'what' was done, though the disparities were on *how* things were done. Setting up a research methodology for two different contexts presented major difficulties, as it is clear that I was not comparing like with like and consequently, adjustments were made along the way

In order to eliminate some potential problems that arose due to the distance between the researcher and pupils, there was a need to elaborate strategies that could 'break the ice' and introduce elements of familiarity in the rapport between them and myself. Such strategies might be improvised on the spot or they might be more elaborated and include a prepared scenario in which the researcher befriends the pupils, feigns ignorance and asks for information from the pupils, eventually gaining the confidence of the pupil cohort.

When I began this study I was aware that a specific difficulty in conducting these interviews in both societies might arise from the fact that the interviews were conducted with children, of a relatively young age (10-11) (Christensen and Prout, 2002). In such a case more effort needs to be put into setting the interview schedule, which can be regarded as a difficult case interview. As Drever (1995, p. 52) points out:

Pupils also count as difficult cases. They usually regard any adult asking them questions as 'some sort of teacher'. And are quick to penetrate that you are not! This means that their response is affected by expectation derived from the

classroom (is this sort of test? are they supposed to know the answers?) and notions of what it is proper to say to teachers. The best you can do is to run your interview formally, treat their answers seriously, and show neither approval nor disapproval of the views they express. In interpreting the results, you need to bear in mind that what you have got is not 'pupils' views' so much as 'statements made by pupils in an interview with a (supposed) teacher'. You should not attempt to make allowance for this, or reinterpret what they have said.

A further issue of major significance is that as in other modes of empirical research, in semi-structured interviews, the balance of power between the two participants is not equal, with the interviewer usually seen as having considerably more power than the interviewee (Nunan, 1992, p. 150; Prout and James, 1997). Although it can be argued that if children decide to be 'silent', thus refusing to engage with the questions, they exert their power. The differential power of the interviewer becomes materialised in a certain subjectiveness in the interview, outside the set structure of the question, that is, in prompts, digressions or repetitions, but also even more apparent in the final analysis through selection of the statements that will be considered for interpretation (May, 1995).

All interviews were recorded, as this allowed me to focus entirely on the interaction with the pupils. Note taking would have slowed down the pace of the discussion and would have reminded the children the obvious differences between us and served to position me as the teacher (Epstein, 1998). I attempted to use several different strategies in order to make the recording as inconspicuous as possible, though all pupils were

made aware that they were being recorded. As this created certain self-consciousness at the beginning, besides being somewhat flattering for the children, I tried to make the equipment less obvious and pretend it was not there. After the initial awkwardness, most of the interview subjects appeared to become oblivious of the fact that they were being recorded.

At a later stage, I transcribed all the interviews, which proved to be a very useful process in the analysis of the data. As Seldon and Pappworth (1983, p. 87) explain: 'It is best if you do personally transcribe the interviews because only you will be able to recall precisely what was said when words are unclear (as on occasions they will be) as you will be more familiar with proper names or technical words.' As Saran (1985, p. 226) argues: 'Writing-up interviews is time-consuming, but crucial if the data is to be useful for later reference and analyses in conjunction with other data on the same topic.'

4 Comparative study as a research method

Using a comparative approach in case study research presents a number of challenges regarding its general methodology, epistemology, and purpose (Hantrais and Manger, 1996; Hollingsworth, 1999). Critically exploring some of these challenges in the context of the present research, it becomes apparent that the comparative dimension leads to specific insights regarding the research objectives and facilitating outcomes, while at the

same time, I draw attention to the limitations of the process and question the validity of potential findings.

Methodologically, the framework of most contemporary comparative studies in education and social science is still located within the nation-state (Crossley, 2000). Comparative paradigms are set up *between* different nation-states and rarely *within* a state. This can lead to a number of potential criticisms, that certain national models will be granted higher status, while others are evaluated against or re-configured in relation to the former. A further criticism is that globalisation can represent a further pressure in manufacturing identical desirable outcomes across the world, while ignoring local cultural specificities in the process of comparative research. On the positive side, a more qualitative comparative research approach is gaining greater recognition (Grant, 2000), against a background of a proliferation of smaller studies, carried out by local practitioners, in tune with the cultural specificities of individual sites, as against a longer tradition of comparing quantitative research outcomes within international bodies (Brah et al., 1999a). Another important feature of comparative research is the possibility of repositioning the parameters of research. As Crossley (2000, pp. 325-326) maintains:

[...] Comparative and international research in education is especially well positioned to recognise the complex tensions that exist between the ideas and developments that inform both globalisation and post-modernism. [...] With its global awareness and traditional concern for context and culture, the comparative field's engagement with these contemporary bodies of literature inevitably points to the importance of the future study of issues of convergence and divergence in

education. This rationale relates well to the more orthodox analysis of similarities and differences, but also draws attention to the importance of alternative frames of reference to that of the nation state.

Comparison as a research method can serve a variety of purposes, as it can be used to build an explanatory theory, but also it can create a 'frame of reference to which varying observations can be related' (Raivola, 1985, p. 363). Raivola (ibid.) establishes a categorisation of comparisons according to the type of equivalence used and from his position, my research falls under the '*cultural equivalence*' correspondence, that is, '*phenomena [that] are observed or judged in the same way in different cultures*' (p. 399). In order to establish a valid comparison, however, three conditions need to be satisfied: do concepts under comparison correspond?; how is the correspondence of measurements to be assessed?; and, can the problem of how concepts are linguistically expressed be resolved? (ibid. pp. 368-369)

Comparative methods generate knowledge by the age-old mechanism of making the familiar strange (Grant, 2000) and thus engage in a process of exploration. Nevertheless, this can go even deeper, as Raivola (1985) argues 'that the basic human mental operations are recognition, comparison, and classification' (p. 371). The purpose of descriptive comparison is to construct concepts according to which phenomena can be classified and arranged. At the same time, it can become a process of (self)discovery:

Not only the research community's scientific orientation (that is, its paradigm) but also the habits of thought built up by the national culture generate in the

researcher many untested assumptions that affect his or her values, motivation, selection of facts, and interpretation of them. The essence of cultural bias is precisely this: The way individuals represent the world to themselves and their concept of knowledge and truth are such an organic part of their culture-bound thinking that they cannot recognise a different world or a different truth. (ibid. p. 370)

Alongside the gathering of factual data, comparative research serves an important reflexive purpose, as Grant (2000) argues that 'it is possible to examine one's own system critically from the inside, but it is more difficult without a comparative perspective' (p. 315).

It is generally accepted that the major purpose of comparative research is to generate a body of argument for policy formation. As research is generally conducted between nation-states and in many cases there is an undeclared assumption of hierarchical positioning of the respective nations (Grant, 2000), models of best practice tend to be offered. As Broadfoot (2000) states:

Comparative education has always been explicitly and implicitly reformative. The reason for undertaking comparative education studies has not typically been simply that of scholarly interest, although there is a place for this. Rather, as with most other branches of educational research, the goal has been to find 'what works' and to use such insights to inform educational policy-making and educational practice. It is a scholarship that, by and large, has been intentionally reformative'. (p. 366)

This idea of 'reformative intentionality' is further developed by Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003) as a dominant 'mode of governance' (p. 426) in the context of globalisation and European integration that result in a curtailing of sovereignty of national governments:

Although the world is witnessing the emergence of new forms of political organisations, and a renewed attention is being paid to questions of how communities are imagined, it is clear that the political and societal form of the nation-state will not disappear in the near future, and the end of the era of nationalism is not remotely in sight. World relations tend to be defined through complex communication networks and languages that consolidate new powers and regulations. International criteria and comparative references are used as a reaction to the crisis of political legitimacy that is undermining democratic regimes around the world. The statement 'We are all comparativists now' illustrates a global trend, one that perceives comparison as a method that would find 'evidence' and hence legitimise political action. This perception of the political role of comparative research places the comparative approaches in a position that carries a responsibility, and consequently entails the production of policy decision and actions by definitions of standards, outcomes and benchmarks. (ibid., p. 427)

This kind of policy development through international comparison leads to what Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003) calls the politics of 'mutual accountability' which 'brings a sense of sharing and participation, inviting each country (and each citizen) to a perpetual comparison to the other' (p. 427). This logic of perpetual comparison and mutual accountability legitimises a policy that is built around a rhetoric of identity and diversity, leading nevertheless to similar solutions.

Comparative case study as a research method follows the path of other qualitative research methods in social sciences in that it is seen not to have the rigour and prescriptiveness of the scientific paradigm. Its strengths are intrinsically linked to its weaknesses: it has to 'compare cultures in order to generate insights about variables whilst recognising the integrity of the cultural whole' (Broadfoot, 2000, p. 396), but eventually it is intended to serve policy formation that in turn is expected to lead to changes in the wider culture. In short, though not claiming for itself a generalisability, in-depth analysis generated within the 'particular' case-study produces a more complex picture of multiple realities; a cumulative knowledge of the interweaving of complex social processes and cultural identities that researchers, policy-makers and practitioners may find useful as a source of knowledge (Connolly, 1998a).

These considerations of comparative study as a research method largely address my initial goals set out in the introductory chapter regarding the aim of this study: understanding the respective cultural contexts of the case studies and also my perspective as initially formed and re-formed by the evolution of the research. A further important aim was the investigation of policy in the two societies, aiming for an exploration of possible alternatives for a more inclusive, less nationalistic education in Romanian schools, as I had assumed was operating within the UK. Although, I discovered a more complex social reality in the UK, nevertheless, I still believe that the latter may serve as a resource for the educational development of a modernised notion of citizenship in Romania.

5 Ethics

The whole research project was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines that are seen as common practice in educational research (Christensen and Prout, 2002). I would make a distinction between general elements of ethical practice that are common to this and many other modes of research, and the particular ethical dilemmas that have arisen during the process of carrying out this specific study. There is ample reference to general guidelines on ethical practice for educational research, concerning issues such as access to research subjects, the rights of research subjects and the obligations of the researcher. I have consulted the codes and guidelines produced by the British Educational Research Association (1992) and the British Sociological Association (1994), as well as the suggestions of several authors including Cohen and Manion (1994), Lewis and Lindsay (2000), Powney and Watts (1987), and Walker (1985) and I have selected ethical guidelines that inform my study.

Participants in the research were informed about the aims of the research in order to encourage their participation in it. First, the management of the school, usually the head or the deputy head was consulted, as they were seen as the main, formal institutional gatekeepers. At this level, the purposes of the research were thoroughly explained, as access depended on convincing them that the research was worthwhile and that it would be carried out in a responsible manner. If other staff became involved, I offered the same explanations. The decision to grant me access to the schools and to the children

was taken by the heads, as they considered that the nature of the inquiry would not require further consent from the parents of the children, as the ultimate guardians. The decision to grant me access was taken after the head of the school was satisfied with my credentials (that is, a police vetting certificate, a reference from my supervisors, and a personal interview).

The pupils themselves were informed that they could, if they wanted, participate in a research project, but not too many details were given about the aims of the study itself. In order to obtain their consent, they were told that a researcher would be around observing their classes and later talk to them, before inviting them to be interviewed. It had to be explained what this meant, that is, that I was going to ask them a few questions and record their responses. It was made clear that participation was to be voluntary and that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished. There was no pressure on any of the pupils to take part in the interviews. On the contrary, there was always an excess of hands raised when I was asking them out to have the interviews taped.

The research followed the traditional guidelines of ensuring total anonymity to the participants in the study. During the interviews, none of the pupils were asked to give his or her name and no record appears about their personal identity. Anonymity and confidentiality have been preserved during the analysis of the taped interviews and the presentation of the results. There were instances when pupils discovered that talking to

me involved being recorded on a tape and that made them uncomfortable and in such cases I just stopped the machine and continued to take notes or just concluding with a neutral chat before taking them back, in order to avoid the feeling that they had 'failed' the interview, although they were told that this was in no way an assessment or a test. As the interviews were carried out in groups of twos or threes, sometimes the mix of pupils engendered complex and intimidating relations between themselves and in these cases I had to stop the interview and reconsider the composition of the group. I also maintained the anonymity of the staff, though no formal interviews were conducted with them, I did gather a lot of productive data, either from informal conversation or sitting in during their classes. Similarly, I tried to fend off the curiosity of the staff about pupil responses, though I did have to give away whether their responses were 'clever or not'. I ensured that the research was carried out with minimal disruption for the educational process. This was achieved by establishing a good collaboration with teachers and careful timing of the interviews.

The particular ethical concern I had in carrying out this research was not to instil involuntarily in the minds of the pupils any ideas that might be 'alien' to them. As the BERA guidelines state that 'researchers have a responsibility to be mindful of cultural, religious, gendered, and other significant differences within the research population' (BERA 1992, p. 2) and I attempted within the interviews to ensure there was no negative impact on these cultural differences. I realised it might be possible to introduce some ideas in the conversation that would be mine, but might be later appropriated by the

pupils. This would certainly go beyond the remit of the research, but also would 'contaminate' the data I was collecting. Therefore, I had to exercise special care not to ask any question that would reflect my ideological bias or not to contradict or correct any of the statements of the pupils, however controversial they might be. This presented me with the occasional dilemma of having to listen to some unacceptable statements that I felt could not respond to. An unintended effect of this was that some children made some racist statements in front of me, and as an adult figure not engaging with them, might have appeared to affirm these comments. I can only hope that this did not become a serious reinforcement mechanism of negative attitudes and beliefs (See Griffin, 1993) for an alternative perspective, where she speaks of 'talking back' to the research participants).

6 The pilot study

The primary reason for carrying out a pilot study was to familiarise myself with the process of interviewing children. As my previous experience of interviewing was limited to adults, I considered the task of talking to children in such a formal way quite intimidating. Alongside this, I had never been in a British school before and had only mediated knowledge of all aspects of school-life in the UK. Conducting a pilot was also the logical first step in setting up the fieldwork for the whole study and was a necessary 'dress-rehearsal' of the interview schedule. As Powney and Watts (1987, p. 127) argue, it is unlikely that the same person can be interviewed twice, so getting it right in every

aspect (that is, initial contact, conducting the interview, the logistics, interview schedule *et cetera*) on the first occasion is essential. Strategically, as a practical support, the pilot study may help to eliminate obvious errors and generate improvements (Burgess, 1995).

In my case, I was most concerned with the initial contact with the pupils and with my ability to communicate with them. I was concerned with how they might perceive me and whether I would be able to encourage them to have a dialogue with me. At this stage of my research, I was still quite anxious about my ability to understand spoken English in the Northeast and also to make myself understood by the speakers of the local dialect. I was also testing the interview schedule and wanted to make sure I was developing appropriate questions in a suitable formulation for children of this age. Piloting the questions was a good way of eliminating ambiguous, confusing, or insensitive questions (Wellington, 1996, p. 21) and retaining only those that were clearly understood by the interview subjects.

Having all this in mind, I started looking for a school with a suitable age group of pupils and where access would be relatively easy to secure. The pilot study was carried out in March 2001, in a secondary school in Newcastle, Arthur's Hill Comprehensive. The school is situated in a deprived area of the city, with a considerable intake of ethnic minority children and refugees. Access was secured through the University which has longstanding links with the school and the deputy head, Ms Armitage. She accepted that I undertook my study during her classes. This was necessary because at that

moment I had not fulfilled the necessary requirements for conducting research unsupervised in a school, that is, I did not have a police vetting certificate, which would have allowed me to interview the children in a one to one environment. Consequently, traditional routes of negotiating access followed by familiarisation with the school environment were not possible to be included in the pilot.

I decided to focus on checking the interview schedule as well as my social interactive skills (Powney and Watts, 1987) that I would need in dealing with ten and eleven-year-old pupils. The questions were intended to provide an understanding of children's conception of their national identity. They were largely similar to the interview schedule used by Carrington and Short (1996) in a previous study about children's conceptual understanding of national and racial identity. A minimal set of questions was used for the pilot, mainly focused on the difference between Britishness, Englishness and 'otherness', and the concepts the children used to include themselves and others into these categories. I left out the questions from Carrington and Short's study that were inquiring about race relations. In the end, the following questions were asked:

- What are you (English, British, etc)?
- What makes a person British?
- How does someone become British?
- What does it mean to be British?
- What is good about being British?
- What is the best/worst thing about being British?
- Is anyone living here British?

- Are some people more British than others?

The interviews were carried out in the classroom, while the teacher was busy conducting small-group activities, which allowed me to pick my small group of three to four pupils and take them to a quiet corner of the classroom. We sat at a table and I placed the bulky tape-recorder with an external microphone on the table, but unfortunately, both were quite visible and impressive, thus causing unwelcome distraction for the interviewees. After an introduction that was intended to be reassuring, very quickly I started reading out the questions, directing them to any one pupil of the group and waited for responses. A major shortcoming was that as we were sharing a small table, all pupils could listen to the questions and to their peers' responses. Therefore, the responses were usually repetitive and the closeness of the sitting arrangement contributed even further to the degradation of the quality of the recording, due to the comments and interventions of the other pupils waiting to be interviewed. Responses were brief, most of the time monosyllabic and proved to be of very limited value to my research.

I then attempted a preliminary analysis, mainly to check the quality of the responses, but also to see whether the responses reflected my expectations of the interviews. The total number of the children interviewed were 17, of which 10 were white British, 2 black British (Asian) and 5 were overseas pupils. The tapes were not transcribed due to their poor quality as the interviews were conducted in a crowded classroom, during teaching activities, so they were analysed within the context of these limiting conditions.

The results indicated that the white British pupils generally perceived themselves as being English rather than British, while the black British made use of hyphenated identities to describe themselves. The overseas pupils simply mentioned their original nationality. For the other questions, there were a high number of non-responses and 'don't know' responses.

The pilot study was my first experience as a researcher in conducting interviews and I largely considered it as an apprenticeship in utilising this technique. I came away with a number of errors that I had made, which I needed to address before carrying out the main interviews in Romania and England. The following are some of the initial aspects that needed considerable improvement if I was to conduct successful interviews in the future. First, I needed to spend much more time in the school, to familiarise myself with its environment and, more specifically, the institutional culture of the school, but also to become familiar with the pupils (Greig and Taylor, 1999). I felt that my chances of obtaining articulate and confident responses would increase considerably if the pupils did not perceive me as a complete stranger. I realised that there was a need to devise an introduction to the interviews, as just sitting down and switching on a tape recorder was not much of a strategy in starting an uninhibited discussion. This aspect resurfaced again in the first part of my fieldwork in Romania and I found a workable solution only when I was carrying out my main data collection in England.

Following this, I needed to make significant improvements in the physical infrastructure of the interviewing process, that is, carrying out the interviews in greater privacy, which would allow a more relaxed tone for the interviews and would improve on the quality of the recording, but also would take us out of the gaze of teachers and classroom assistants and the potential pressure on pupils' responses. Furthermore, I needed to reconsider the advantages and disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews. Also, I reflected on the use of group interviews, as this might induce a more congenial environment for the pupils, by being in a group with peers and friends, so they would feel more relaxed to talk to the group and me at the same time, in contrast to being in the room only with me, as a possible intimidating teacher figure. In order to achieve this, I needed to improve my questioning strategies and try to behave less like a teacher, in attitude, voice, and demeanour. Lastly, I had to try to make the interviews more informal. My immediate practical problem was to make the recording as inconspicuous as possible. In order to achieve this I invested in a much smaller recording machine that would be less cumbersome and distracting. At this point, I was reading a range of empirical studies of British schooling, with ethnographies being particularly helpful in developing my confidence that others carrying out empirical work with children shared some of the difficulties I was experiencing. At the same time, in retrospect, I can see that they served to induct me into the institutional cultural specificities of British school life for younger children (see Pollard, 1987b; Epstein, 1993; Connolly, 1998b; Skelton, 2001).

7 Analysing data

The data analysis is built around the data collection methods and it is intended to process the different kinds of information gathered, making sense of these data in an integrated research report. As the analysis of the data should be consistent with the general underlying principles of the research (Powney and Watts, 1987, p. 158), the information being gathered in two ways – observation and interviews – the analysis followed this pattern, as well as the proportion of data obtained by the respective methods. As the most valuable information yielding data came through the interviews, the analysis focuses on analysing the interview transcripts and obtaining meaning from them. While observation was an integral part of the whole process, its role was marginal in extracting meaning necessary in addressing the initial research question. Observation served mainly to contextualise the environment of the schools and to feed in the practical and immediate knowledge that allowed me to successfully conduct the interviews (Gordon, Holland and Lahema, 2000). Familiarisation with the physical landscape and the ethos of the schools proved to be the main objectives of observation, as in the end little hard data was collected through this method.

As the research was carried out in a number of different settings, the amount of time spent observing the settings depended on the degree of familiarity with the respective locations. As both schools in Romania were familiar to me – I used to be a pupil in both of them – I spent little time in having to familiarise myself with the locations. Also, as I

have worked until recently in the same educational system and in a similar school, I was familiar with most aspects of life in the schools and consequently I could generally anticipate the pupils' reactions to me as a researcher.

This was not the case in the schools in England, both during my pilot study and the main data collection phase. The necessity to thoroughly familiarise myself with the school before undertaking the interviews was brought to my attention in the pilot study, as the very limited results of the interviews could partly be attributed to my lack of knowledge of the school and pupils. This problem was largely eliminated during the data collection in the main study, as I spent a considerable time in the summer term observing the site. Beyond the immediate benefit to the interviews that followed, I managed to gather through observation only a limited amount of information that would later on feed into the analysis and the findings. These data were integrated in two ways in the research: general observation and description of the sites are given as a way of familiarising the reader with the setting, while information concerned with the research questions are integrated in the findings.

The description of the schools as research locations is included in this chapter under the headings that deal with location and access. These sections give only the necessary information in order to contextualise the site and also to familiarise the UK reader with the particular context of the Romanian location. Much more data was collected during the observation process, but as it did not prove to be relevant to the specific purpose of

this research, it was eventually discarded. I integrated here the information I considered relevant, but bearing in mind, as suggested by Powney and Watts (1987), that the descriptive materials provided by institutions can be misleading, as reality sometimes is different than what officially produced documents might state. The other type of data I obtained through observation was more complicated to present in a structured way, as it referred mainly to 'absences', in relation to my own expectations. Without attempting a deconstructive approach in trying to understand such 'absences', I integrated these observations later on in the general frame of the findings where I speak of the pupils' lack of a vocabulary in relation to national identity.

The most important method of data collection was the interviews, so the emphasis of the analysis process is on making sense of the material obtained through semi-structured interviews. But I found it very difficult to find a consistent and useful method of analysis within the available literature on research methods. Most researchers appear to stop abruptly before detailing how they analysed their data and just present the findings, or they suggest a number of individual heuristics. Bassey (1999), whose typology of case studies I found the most useful, suggests only an indirect approach to the analysis of the data, when, as indicated above, he speaks about the creation of narrative-analytical accounts (that is, 'stories') or descriptive-analytical accounts (that is, 'pictures') as the interpretative outcomes of case studies (p. 4). Though he later gives examples of such case studies, no details are given as to the analysis or how such a narrative or descriptive analytical account was created. This seems to be a characteristic

feature of some qualitative approaches to research, as Powney and Watts (1987, p. 174) remark:

In quantitative analysis the statistical methods employed are usually discussed and developed in specialist texts and articles. The methods are commonly well-documented and seldom need even referencing in a report. In qualitative research, little is ever written about the process of analysis at all. Few writers make explicit the sequence of activities involved in what they do.

I decided that I would follow the example of many researchers and set up my own heuristics, based on the available methodological guidance and my personal background. As I have received training in literary and discourse analysis, I considered that it would be acceptable to apply the skills and methods I acquired while analysing literary texts to the content of the interviews. As Hull (1985) points out, analysing this sort of data is like an 'exact art' comparable to literary analysis. Besides the obvious differences – literature would be regarded as fiction, while the interviews would contain a high degree of reality – the methods of interpreting and extracting meaning can be deployed in largely similar ways.

As several researchers conclude (Bassey 1999; Stake 2000; Powney and Watts, 1987), results in case studies are subjected to an interpretative analysis first by the researcher and then by the reader of the study. An interview is a co-operative venture between interviewer and interviewee, but the reconstruction of what occurs is usually seen as the analyst's sole prerogative. Reconstruction is the purpose of interpretation and it is a

process of imposing a structure on the accumulated material. As Eco (1990) warns, every interpretation is one of the many possible, though the researcher is the first to have access to the raw data and is thus in a privileged position in imposing a first interpretation. Consecutive readers will have more limited scope for interpretation, but the availability of the case record and the trustworthiness of the analysis as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) should direct them towards similar general conclusions. Overall consistency with the aims of the research will heighten the credibility and validity of the analysis, just as the consistency with the underlying theories and philosophies will ensure clarity and coherence.

In this context, I find it difficult to point out precisely the whole array of theoretical frameworks that support my analysis. But as Bliss, Monk and Ogborn (1983) maintain:

Any analysis of data is the analyst's responsibility, being unavoidably his or her own perception of the data. And every perception of data is a perception through some idea about the data, some previous 'theory' of it. The 'theory' is not necessarily very deep, profound or clear: it may be little more than common sense (and for that reason the harder to notice). Even what counts as 'data' depends on one's theory, point of view or perspective. (p. 89)

The interviews were analysed in three different sets, according to the differences in location and interview schedules (two schools in Romania with a modified set of questions used in the second school and one school in England). The analysis began with transcribing all the interviews in a manner that would make the content grammatical and readable. The first step was more in tune with a quantitative analysis: I

wanted to ensure a certain precision when I was bringing together the themes generated through the responses. I devised a coding schedule for each set of interviews based on the interview schedule and on the responses recorded. Certain patterns emerged after reading all the responses to each question, so a coding system was devised according to the types of responses. The responses generated between three to eight categories of similar responses and I usually added an 'other' category. I followed here some of the steps indicated by Tesch (1990) in Wellington (1996) for data analysis: the text was segmented into relevant and meaningful units, yet maintaining the connection to the whole. Then the segments were categorised according to an organising system that was predominantly derived from the data themselves. The main intellectual tool for establishing the categories and dividing the text was comparative analysis. Conceptual similarities were sought in statements, while categories were being constantly refined towards the discovery of a pattern. All the responses were coded according to this schedule and then introduced in a spreadsheet with a simple addition formula. The results indicated the prevalence of the responses and helped underline the emerging themes. The figures were used in supporting the prevalence of the emerging themes during the interpretation of the transcripts.

This method of analysis was used for the data collected from the two schools in Romania, where the interview schedules were used with more rigor than in the English schools. This enabled me to use a tentative quantitative approach to the analysis. But what was gained in discipline and consistency around the form of the interviews also

involved a sense of loss in the overall content. Rigorously respecting the interview schedule lead to well-structured interviews that would be easier to analyse in a quantitative manner, but I felt that a less restrictive approach would yield richer and more interesting data. Therefore, during the data collection in England, I used the questions more as a starting point to a more flexible interview, where the freedom of the discussion that ensued brought a more sustained dialogue between the interviewees and myself. Consequently, the analysis did not follow the same tentative quantitative approach, though a more limited coding schedule was used, but only to help highlight the emerging themes in the responses.

The analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in a new text that re-told the story of the interviews. Thus, the results of the enquiry emerge under the form of a new discourse that presents all the findings, as Bassey (1999, p. 62) concludes:

‘Story-telling and picture-drawing case studies are both analytical accounts of educational events, projects, programmes of systems aimed at illuminating theory. Story-telling is predominantly a narrative account of the exploration of the case, with a strong sense of a timeline. Picture-drawing is predominantly a descriptive account, drawing together the results of the exploration and analysis of the case. Both should give theoretical insights, expressed as a claim to knowledge, but this is more discursive than the fuzzy propositions of theory-seeking and theory testing case study.’

8 Conclusions

This chapter presents the methodological concerns with which I critically engaged while constructing and carrying out the empirical part of the study. It reflects the changing nature of the emerging issues and the attempted solutions I developed through a continuous reflexive process. At the same time, it provides a detailed account of the methods and techniques used for collecting and analysing data. The complexity of the inquiry, that is, trying to understand how children in two highly different societies think about national identity in the context of contemporary citizenship, required research methods that enable the authentic voices of children to be heard and also to facilitate the understanding of their multi-layered identities. Furthermore, the chapter also presents a number of the findings under the form of observation data embedded in the narrative accounts of the research process. This links up to the next chapter that continues these accounts, detailing a critical encounter with the content of the interviews.

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1. Introduction

The research has been conducted in two different locations, in an attempt to establish a comparative perspective in exploring national identity formation among pupils, aged 10-11 years old. As indicated in the last chapter, the choice of two different research sites generated a number of methodological problems along the way. The two case studies, located in Romania and the UK, are different on a great number of aspects, such as historical, social, and economical contexts, while at the same time, there are significant cultural differences that might make such a comparison hard to sustain.

Each aspect of this research project has raised key issues, suggesting a more complex social reality than I had anticipated when I set out my initial thoughts on the thesis. In relation to the data collection, analysis, and results, explored in this chapter, the major issue exemplifying this more complex picture was the question of the inter-relationship between data collection, language, and national contexts. There is a large body of philosophical work that examines such questions in relation to the social production of knowledge (Bryman, 1993). My main concern, however, was more practical. I can now see that I began the research with modernist assumptions, believing that there is a universal and foundational 'truth' gained through a correspondence of ideas with social

reality and that the natural sciences are the appropriate model for thinking about both the social and natural world. However, in terms of the object of my inquiry in the thesis there were serious issues around the children's conceptualisation of nationality and ethnicity, and the vocabulary that they have to express these issues. In the Romanian schools, where educational authorities produce significant amounts of guidelines and materials for teaching about national identity, children have a vast and rich vocabulary to talk about nation, nationality, ethnicity, cultural belonging and difference, but little access to critical discourses to begin to open up the concept of national belonging and a plural society. In this context, it is possible to hold onto the belief of a simple correspondence between children's ideas and social reality. In short, they were able to answer my research questions about nationality. However, in the UK context, which has not until recently addressed the issue of the nation in the National Curriculum, the pupils I interviewed seemed to lack both concepts and vocabulary to discuss any of these issues. (The teaching of Citizenship was just being introduced as I carried out my empirical work and I did not yet have the opportunity to conduct any research or evaluation of it). In this context, I was forced into reflecting on how to gather empirical data in the absence of a vocabulary. As discussed more fully in the methodology chapter, the breakthrough came in giving high epistemological status to the pupils' accounts, which helped resolve my problem of data collection, as I developed an increasing awareness that *national identity*, as a single category, was not sufficient to capture the children's sense of their 'national selves' but rather involved interconnecting identity positions, spoken through language, regionalism, gender and consumerism.

As more fully discussed in the methodology chapter, the use of a more significantly qualitative approach, particularly in the case study in the UK seemed an appropriate choice, as it involves a study of a culture (Walford, 2001; Marcus, 1986), and in order to understand such a multifaceted process as the development of national identity, I needed to examine a great number of variables within and outside the school in order to try to understand the institutional culture in which this process takes place (Connolly, 1994). In addition, qualitative research uses a variety of methods, which generates diverse forms of data, about people, place, and time (Walford, 2001; Bryman, 1993). Case study, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation were all part of my empirical research, though practised to various extents, thus generating a whole range of data that was itself varied to the same extent.

Within this context, the aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the data collection process and of the data itself. It follows the two separate data collection processes in Romania and in England, respectively, looking at the details of the process such as negotiating access to the sites of the research, description of the sites, setting up the interviewing, and specific ethical issues. It also presents the interview schedules used and how the interviewing process itself took place. In each section, there is also a continuous reflexive dimension, as I engage critically with the specificities of each society and the limitations I encountered in attempting to compare the two societies and their possible influence on the quality and validity of the data.

There are two major sections in which the data collected from the two case studies is presented within a discourse analysis which attempts to identify the themes that are capable of shedding light on the concepts deployed by children in making sense of nation. At the same time, I attempted to illuminate the range of children's responses to national identity formation from those who perceived identity in an exclusivist and essentialist manner to those who adopted a pluralistic and inclusive position.

2. Fieldwork in Romania

2.1. *Romania today*

The last decades in Romania's history have left a legacy of transience and instability to due the number and frequency of profound changes in the political realm. The marked liberalisation and relative prosperity of the late 1960s and early 1970s was replaced by a regime of unadulterated Stalinism and worsening economic crisis. Every aspect of life in the 1980s has become subject to fundamentalist ideological prescriptiveness and increased authoritarian control. This was accompanied by the development of a powerful nationalist discourse, based on such themes as autarchy, collective paranoid delusions and phobic isolation (Marino, 1995). The shock of the end of Communism in the Eastern Block came at a time when Romanian society was quite fragile after the nefarious decade of the 1980s, and in more than one way, it was unprepared to embrace a concept of democracy and social order that has developed in the West after the Second World War. Political and economic transition, as well as cultural and social, was

traumatic and slow, with various moments of halt or regression. The nationalistic campaign started by the previous regime was one such moment of halted development, as it has survived and taken on new dimensions, sometimes occupying centre stage on the political scene (Tismăneanu, 1999).

Education in general reflected society at large: the same political and economic pressures imposed various changes that were alien to the spirit of the educational process, whether it is the strict ideological supervision or the subordination of schools to the subsistence economy during the crisis of the 1980s. After the end of the Ceaușescu era, the momentum of some of these processes was and is still to be felt: the personal investment into the old regime and transformation of many within the teaching staff could not be reversed overnight. Whether in open resistance or in the hidden curriculum, the nationalistic discourse in school continues, in many cases reflected in a generational war between the older, more reactionary and younger, more liberal staff. Political interference also, has not been eliminated, as powerful right-wing and extreme nationalist parties and media support the cause of a 'patriotic' education.

The present data collection was done in two schools from the city of Cluj-Napoca. The city is the most important city from Transylvania, the Northeastern part of Romania, with a mixed ethnic population of around 450.000 people, about 75-80 % of the population are ethnic Romanians and around 20 % Hungarians. It is a city where there have been real ethnic tensions between the two communities in the early 1990s,

although these tensions have not degenerated into outright inter-community violence. There is, however, up to this day, a climate of suspicion, tension and lack of co-operation.

An intense psychological battle is fought out by the two communities over symbolic markers of identity and aspects of heritage, in which education has become a regrettable pawn. The Hungarian community is trying to reclaim a heritage that it believes itself entitled to, while the Romanian side perceives its hegemony being under threat by such claims. Covert or open hostility exists between the various representatives and many times these are fought out by proxy in schools and universities, as described in more details in the Literature Review Chapter.

2.2. Choice of site and access

Because the initial idea was to have a mixed cohort of both Romanian and Hungarian pupils, reflecting the ethnic composition of the region and the city where the research was carried out, it was necessary to look for schools that have the required composition of pupils. My initial idea was to reflect roughly the percentage of ethnic Romanians and Hungarians. The first choice was the Constantin Brâncuși High School, where I had excellent contacts with the head of the school and they showed themselves very open to the idea of becoming a research site for somebody from a foreign university. The structure of the school, in spite of being called 'high school', comprises classes ranging from elementary level to A-level classes. It is a local equivalent of a 'beacon school',

enjoying a high degree of autonomy with what is still a highly centralised system, being somewhat less dependent on the local inspectorate, and involved with the teacher training programme of the local university. The only problem with this school was that the teaching language is exclusively Romanian, so I had to look for another school where Hungarian language teaching was available. I did not have any other contact with established Hungarian language schools and being aware of potential reticence on the part of head teachers in engaging their school in research about national identity, I sought a smaller, mixed comprehensive school, located on one of the estates of the city. The school in question was Școala Generală Nr 100 and the main reason for choosing this particular school was the proximity to my house. I would also like to add that I was a pupil in both these schools during my education.

Both schools could be seen as fairly homogeneous from a social point of view. The High School is situated in the city centre and being a selective school at intake at primary level and then at 14, it has a more middle-class cohort of pupils, with better academic results. The other school is a 'bog-standard' comprehensive on a former council estate, with pupils coming from a lower-middle class and working class background, as well as from some of the surrounding villages.

Seeking informed consent with regard to minors involves two stages. First, researchers consult and seek permission from those adults responsible for the prospective participants; and second, they approach the young people themselves (Cohen and

Manion, 1994). The adults in question were teachers and principals, and the object of the research needed to be fully explained to them and permission sought. Obtaining this approval is more difficult when it involves children, but it is essential, particularly at a time when there is a constant concern with their welfare and security. In addition, children were asked whether they want to be part of this research, involving responding to a series of questions. Although the purpose of the research was clearly communicated to the adults and permission was granted, formal approval from the children was sought, with questions such as: 'Would you mind responding to a few questions?' or 'Could you help me understand a few things about...?'

The negotiation of access in schools in Romania was made easier by the fact that I am a qualified teacher and I passed through the same training process as any other teacher, so this meant that I provided through my professional qualifications some instant security guarantees. Also, there is a much more reasonable level of policing around children and schools are not impenetrable fortresses. The heads of the schools were approached, with a letter explaining the purpose of the research, giving guarantees about its confidentiality and anonymity, regarding both staff and pupils. Usually, the heads ensured that the staff was aware of the research going on in the school, and after that they assigned me to the respective form-masters. In Romanian schools, all classes have a form-master in charge of administrative and disciplinary matters and so all contact between the pupils and me was mediated through the form-masters. At the Constantin Brâncuși High School the head teacher, Mrs Scurtu, was very welcoming and

established contact with the teachers with whom I was going to work, who acted informally as gatekeepers within the institutional culture of the school. This was highly significant, as indicated above, I have a general familiarity with Romanian schools. As I came to realise, however, that each school and indeed each classroom has its own specific, local culture that as a researcher one needs to negotiate (Walford, 1998). In short, I was in the process of shifting from teacher professional knowledge of school life to a researcher's critical positioning, that sets out to make strange the everyday familiarity pupils' and teachers' lives.

Mr Deaconu, a Mathematics teacher with considerable experience, who was very self-confident and had a clear picture of the pupils in his class. He was very helpful in introducing me to the class, establishing the first contact and giving a real depiction of the composition of the class. He also spoke about his experience with Roma children, his accounts being the only source of information about the educational problems experienced by Roma pupils, although at the time there were no Roma pupils in any of his classes. Mr Deaconu was very interested in my research and kept contact with me from the beginning until the end of the data collection (as it became apparent from a series of conversations we had before and during my data collection). The other teacher from Constantin Brâncuși was Miss Munteanu, a young Spanish teacher. Miss Munteanu was less experienced, but a very committed teacher. She facilitated access to the pupils, being extremely helpful in providing a room for the interviews, so the quality of the data collection with her class was carried out in the best conditions. A fact

reflected in the quality of the recording, length of responses and number of probes and prompts, et cetera.

At the Școala Generală Nr 100 the contact with the head, Mrs Lupescu, was established through the mediation of a teacher who was again a personal acquaintance. Establishing contact in this way is easier and is common practice in Romania. Being a stranger produces a range of potential barriers in relation to institutional gatekeepers. Access was granted easily enough, after explaining the purpose of the research, and after a consultation between the head and the deputy head. I was assigned to the only Hungarian fifth form within the school. The form-master, Ms Kovács, an English teacher, informed me that the academic level of the pupils was rather poor, being a school within an estate, while the catchment area was rather vast. However, the number of the pupils in the class was only 20 instead of the customary 25, reflecting a decline in the birth rate of the Hungarian population in the region. I did not have much contact with Ms Kovács, who introduced me to the class, after that I was very much on own with the class during the whole data collection period.

2.3. The interview schedule

As indicated above, Romanian researchers investigating issues relating to national identity amongst children often adopt a quantitative methodological position, involving a direct and focused approach, consisting of precise questions (Centrul de cercetare a relațiilor interetnice din Transilvania, 1998). The justification of this is that in Romania

there are several powerful discourses emanating from various sources (media, political figures, *et cetera*) which maintain a permanent debate about what constitutes national identity (see Mungiu-Pippidi 1999, 2002). Hence, it is argued that empirical research must compete with the strength of these discourses and that in these circumstances the questionnaire or structured interview is the most appropriate method. There is a heavy emphasis on the 'traditional value' of belonging to the nation, though the attributes of individual participation in the nation-group are less than clear (Bocşan et al. 1998). Outside school these discourses are pervasively circulated, so it is assumed that children might be desensitised about issues relating to their understanding of national identity. At the same time, there are only a few questions that can be asked without fear of rekindling nationalist attitudes and so a degree of neutrality needed to be exercised, but balanced with the need to attract the attention of pupils who might be somewhat blasé about questions around national identity. Within this specific national context, a semi-structured interviewing approach appeared to be the most appropriate, allowing some gradation and flexibility around the timing and wording of questions, prompts and probes, with reference to my general qualitative concern with understanding issues of culture, meaning, and subjectivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

The interview schedule was a translation of one conceived in English. It was translated in Romanian and Hungarian and adapted to the specific situation of the two national groups. The questions were almost identical, just the words 'Romanian' and 'Hungarian' being interchangeable. In general, I read out the questions directly, but

quite often, there was minor rephrasing. In some instances, the questions might have seemed too abstract and then I had to adopt a more hands-on strategy. For a question like: 'How would you explain to a "foreigner" what a Romanian is?' I would use 'Imagine I am a "foreigner". Now, how would you explain to me what a Romanian is?' For the Hungarian interviews, some questions were abandoned, questions which figure in the Romanian variant ('Have you heard before the word Romanian? What language is spoken in this country?'). The reason for this was mainly to gain time, as they were seen as introductory questions.

The interview started with a general question that enquired about the pupils' background, age, family and region they come from. The question was formulated in the following way: (1) **'Tell me about yourself, about your family, where you come from?'** This was intended to open up the conversation that was to take place between myself and the pupil, so I did not intervene with any probes or prompts in order to elicit more information, which was not considered relevant for the purpose of this study. Due to the social levelling of the communist regime and the position of the two schools, it could be taken for granted that most children would come from lower middle class (for Constantin Brâncuși High School) and working class (for Școala Generală Nr 100) families. The age of the children was again known in advance as well as the city they were coming from.

The second question (2) **'Have you heard before the word Romanian?'** was again used to establish further contact, this time between the pupils and the subject of the interview. Obviously, it was a rhetorical question, which made most pupils smile. But with this question, the topic was established; it opened the way to the more 'serious' questions. It must be mentioned that due to lack of time, as indicated above, this question was not asked to the Hungarian cohort. It also would have been awkward to ask them whether they had heard about the word Romanian, thus reminding them of their status as a minority living amongst a majority of the Romanian population.

I decided to adopt for this thesis the usage of 'national minority' and 'ethnic group' as they are generally used in Eastern Europe, where a national minority is made up of people who speak a language different from the country in which they reside and usually have citizenship, as they see themselves belonging to the 'national community' of another nation-state, most likely a neighbouring country (Boia, 2002a). In Romania, the main national minority groups are the Hungarians, Germans, Turks, Ukrainians, Russians, and Greeks. While an ethnic group would be considered a community that does not belong to the different 'national community' of a recognised nation state or the major marker of difference – language – is not strong enough. Those most likely to be considered an 'ethnic minority' in the region are the Romas; however, I have to point out that these definitions are being contested and usage may vary.

The following question, (3) **'Why is somebody Romanian?'** is one of central importance because it addresses the manner in which nationality is conceptualised and more specifically focuses upon the attributes which circumscribe the idea of one's nationality.

The next question could be seen as more of a rhetorical question: also its function was to check the how pupils define their own identity: (4) **'Are you Romanian or something else?'** Again, it focused on the national background of the pupils, positioning them within certain co-ordinates relating to their nationality, whether they conceived it in monolithic terms or they could accept a hyphenated variant of it. The question was also used to establish the ethnic structure of the sample.

Question number five, (5) **'Are your parents Romanian or something else?'** is linked to the national background of the pupils, looking again at the structure of the cohort, but also suggesting the *ius sanguinis* explanation, nationality being ascribed by right of birth, a lineage from parents to children, as a possible defining characteristic of establishing national identity.

The next two questions were intended to test the awareness of the pupils about the fact that they live in a multiethnic society, whose main attribute is linguistic diversity. The question (6) **'What language is spoken in this country?'** attempts to test whether pupils perceive society in a monolithic manner as a monolingual unit. The question, if deconstructed, suggests that in 'this country', Romania, the language spoken by

everybody is, naturally, Romanian. The other question, (7) **'Is Romanian the only language spoken in this country?'** functioned as a probe to the preceding question, trying to undermine the monolithic view of the nation as a monolingual unit. Also, it was the first in a series of questions which attempted to see whether the pupils were aware of the existence of minorities in their society. These two questions were not asked to the Hungarian group because of obvious reasons their responses would have indicated that besides Romanian, their Hungarian language is spoken and that they are fully aware of their own existence as a national and linguistic minority in this society.

Question number eight: (8) **'What is the most important thing for you as a Romanian: your language, your parents, your religion, or the region you come from?'** suggests a series of elements that can contribute to the formation of the pupils' national identity. Language is probably the most salient factor in asserting national identity in Romania; the family is still a powerful nucleus in a society considered as somewhat patriarchal. Religion is an interesting element, especially after the decades of imposed atheism of the communist regime followed by a forceful revival of the churches after the transition to democracy. Romania is a multi-faith society, with mainly Christian denominations, separated along national and regional divisions. Regionalism is a concept that has also been revived in recent times, as the country is divided into distinct regions that possess their own particularities in language, customs, and traditions.

The following set of three questions (9) **‘Is it good to be Romanian?’** (10) **What is the best thing if you are Romanian?’** and (11) **‘What is the worst thing if you are Romanian?’** are linked by the same theme, an axiological perception of their nationality. They were intended to retrieve responses that might shed light on the value attributed to the idea of belonging to the national group, prompting the description of this group in highly positive or highly negative terms. These questions are meant to test to what extent the pupils have internalised the clichés about their nation that circulate in society or in the curriculum and to what extent they endorsed nationalist views.

Question number twelve returns again to the idea of the multiethnic society: (12) **‘Is everybody who lives in this country Romanian?’** It was hoped that the pupils would acknowledge the presence of traditional ethnic minorities, such as the Hungarians, Germans, Turks, Russians and Romas or the new, visible, or racial minorities like Middle Eastern or Chinese groups. The next question, (13) **‘What are your feelings towards people who are different from you?’** is essentially testing the level of tolerance of the pupils towards national minorities and probing for possible xenophobia.

The following two questions refer to the specific relationship between Romanians and Hungarians on one hand and Romas on the other hand. (14) **What can you say about Gypsies, are they Romanian too?** is a potentially difficult question because there is no consensus in wider Romanian society about the social position of Gypsies. Neither is there within the Roma minority a consensual agreement whether this community

considers itself as a distinct part of the society, as a 'traditional' (linguistic, ethnic) minority or as an integrated part of Romanian society. I did have many misgivings about whether to ask this question as it might reinforce exclusivist notions of race and culture which I was expecting to find amongst the sample. The pupils were asked whether they could accept a minority largely defined in ethnic, racial, or non-national terms as part of the national group to which they belong. The other question, (15) **'What are your feelings about Gypsies?'** is trying to clarify the perception of the Romas by the pupils, in reality to see if the Romas are perceived in racist terms.

Questions number sixteen and seventeen, (16) **'How can somebody become a Romanian?'** and (17) **'Who can become a Romanian?'** were intended to see whether the nation was perceived as a closed or an open group that allows affiliation, and if the pupils perceived their national group in an exclusivist or an inclusivist manner.

The next question, (18) **'Is it a good thing that in Romania there are other nationalities?'** is again returning to the perception of different national groups. Nevertheless, the deconstruction of the question suggests a positive response, 'Is it a good thing?', thus trying to relate to the previous questions, checking the consistency and honesty of the pupils. It also attempts to establish their attitude towards a multi-ethnic and multicultural society.

The last question, (19) ‘**How could you explain to a foreign tourist who has never seen a Romanian, what a Romanian is?**’ is actually a reworking of question number three (Why is somebody Romanian?), being also linked to the identity list from question number eight (What is the most important thing for you as a Romanian: your language, your parents, your religion, or the region you come from?), being a summation of the conceptual elements of what nationality is, all in an innocent, naïve formulation. It is probably the most difficult question, because it asked the pupils to conceive a definition of what it means to belong to a national group; thus, having to define indirectly what that national group is.

2.4. *Conducting the interviews*

The educational system in Romania is currently structured on three levels: elementary schools, with an age group ranging from 6 to 10, the comprehensive level, age 11-14, and finally, the high school, 15-18. I wished to interview 10-11 year old pupils, who were in the second cycle, the so-called ‘comprehensive’ cycle, in the fifth form. The fifth form is a transition period between the primary school, when pupils are taught by only one teacher, to a system when a different person teaches every subject and the form tutor is in overall charge. My empirical research being undertaken at the very beginning of the school year, during September, the pupils were still in transition between the two systems, being unaccustomed with the new one. They were highly dependent on the form tutors and also very obedient to him or her, which made my work somewhat

easier. Much depended on the co-operation of the form tutors and in my case all of them proved to be very willing to help organise the logistics for the data collection. At the Constantin Brâncuși High School I worked with two fifth forms, with a total number of 32 pupils. The interviews were conducted in an empty classroom, where I was introduced to the children one after the other, taking them out of classes that were usually given by the form masters themselves. It was part of their support to allow me to talk to the children during their classes so as not to disturb other classes and to avoid the necessity of involving other staff. The pupils were quite willing to come to be interviewed, though their enthusiasm differed when they heard the content of the questions. I encountered a certain degree of disappointment in the case of some pupils when they heard the questions, probably because they considered them not very entertaining. There were relatively few non-responses, and the pupils proved to be sufficiently self-confident when responding. Even if it was for the first time that they were being interviewed, they appeared not to be intimidated by the idea of the interview or by the researcher. Their responses were mostly spontaneous and direct. The timing of the interviews was linked to the actual time of the class, that is, 50 minutes during which pupils could leave the classroom. After the interview, the pupil was taken back to their classroom and another pupil was accompanied from the classroom to the interview room. The whole process went as smoothly as possible, in several weekly sessions. The form masters informed me that the academic level of the pupils was average and did not include pupils from the 'best' classes. I told all the pupils that they

could withdraw at anytime from the interview, without having to give me a reason. In the end, none withdrew.

The institutional context at Școala Generală Nr 100 was rather different: the number of the pupils in the class was only 20 instead of the customary 25, reflecting a decline in the birth rate of the Hungarian population in the region. The school could not allocate a room for the interviews, so I had to use the classroom where the pupils were having their classes. This being the case, it was impossible to conduct the interviews during the classes. I had to wait for the twenty minutes break when I remained with two or three pupils in the classroom, interviewing each of them. This allowed only interviewing a maximum 3 pupils per day, as there was only one long 20 minutes break each day, which prolonged the process of carrying out the interviews. The pupils, especially some of the boys, were also a little more reluctant to respond to be interviewed. Due to the small number of pupils, all of them had to be interviewed and this posed a problem of carefully balancing between not using any coercion and actually convincing them to stay for the interview instead of going to play football during the long break. I was perceived as a teacher figure, in a relatively powerful position. This was due, it seemed, to two factors: firstly, the Romanian education system is still imbued with traditional values, especially a stricter, old-fashioned discipline. Pupils are more obedient, more restrained and teachers have considerably more institutional power than they seem to have in English schools. Secondly, as suggested above, the pupils were in a transition period from primary school to secondary school, a transition during which they were

more vulnerable to pressures from teachers. Any adult encountered in the school or the classroom would automatically be perceived as a teacher. In fact, they never asked about my identity and alongside this, the head teachers and the form masters introduced me as a teacher (which technically, I still am). Also, it must be said that not having any experience as a researcher conducting interviews, but having some experience as a teacher, it was more comfortable to adopt the role of the latter. However, I did not abuse this power position: the pupils were interviewed with their consent; they could interrupt the interview at any time and could refuse any co-operation without any explanation, but I worked with the children using the authority of a teacher. It was a delicate balance with which I operated: my attitude and the tone of the conversation were always oscillating between informal friendliness and an authoritative teacher-like position. In addition, I am convinced that the relatively small number of non-responses recorded was due to the perception of the pupils that the conversation they were having was 'serious' and they had to provide some sort of responses to my questions. In spite of all this, I do not feel that I intimidated them in any way and the relationship between the pupils and the researcher has in this case little relevance upon the reliability of the data collected. Nevertheless, I felt that in the future, such ambiguities should be eliminated and I should strive for a much clearer relationship with the pupils I was interviewing.

Growing up in a mixed family and as my education was in both languages, I can speak both Romanian and Hungarian at a native level. This represented a considerable advantage in the course of the interviews because I could blend in with the

interviewees. Speaking Romanian without a Hungarian accent and vice-versa meant that the pupils were not able to identify me as somebody belonging to a different national group, which might have made them much more prudent in what they were saying. So I was perceived as one of them and not, possibly, as one of the 'enemy' from the opposite national group. In a delicate context as it is in Cluj, described above, talking to the children in their language probably ensured that they were fully collaborating with the researcher and that their responses were honest. In addition, I went as far as concealing my name - a Romanian name - from the Hungarian group. I do not consider that this was an unethical decision: revealing my mixed, hyphenated identity would have rendered me alien to both groups of interviewees, which were highly homogenous in their ethnic composition.

2.5. *Data analysis*

I transcribed and translated the collected data as accurately as possible. A coding schedule was devised in order to analyse the children's responses, and the results obtained from this schedule was then introduced in a simple database (Walker, 1985). For the purpose of the analysis, the interviewees were anonymised, hence all children are presented here with a pseudonym. The cohort of pupils interviewed in the two schools was composed of 51 children, of which 20 were male and 31 female, both Romanian and Hungarian. Their responses were analysed together, except when there was a difference in the questions asked during the interviewing, as there were a few

differences between the Romanian and Hungarian schedules. The vast majority of the children were from Cluj, from the school catchment area, with only 2 from different localities. There were 4 cases of non-response about their origin. In both schools the catchment area was urban, lower middle class or working class. For Constantin Brâncusi High School, the catchment area was slightly more problematic because the school was situated in the centre of the city. Thus, the pupils were coming from various areas outside the normal boundaries of the catchment area. Școala Generală No 100 is situated on the Gheorgheni Estate, a moderately prosperous area, with good living conditions, one of the typical high-rise estates built in the 1960s. The two pupils who were not living in Cluj came from small villages near the town.

I structured the analysis around the questions in the interview schedule, in the order that they were asked. There were 19 questions, though, as indicated above, with the Hungarian cohort, there was a slight variation from the original set of questions. The presentation of the interpretation of the responses is presented here in the same order.

1. The first question was largely introductory, to establish a conversation with the subjects, but also to find out as much as possible about their background, though without being intrusive. The question was **‘Tell me about yourself, about your family, where do you come from?’** and I tried to create the impression of the interviews starting as small talk.

2. To the second question, **‘Have you heard before the word Romanian?’** 29 of the Romanian pupils responded affirmatively, 2 were not asked the question. The Hungarian cohort did not have to respond to this introductory question.

3. To the question **‘Why is somebody Romanian/Hungarian?’** the majority of the pupils, 38, responded that they were born Romanian/Hungarian, there was one non-response, two did not know what to respond. While 3 responded that they were Romanian because they lived in Romania, one said he was Romanian because he spoke Romanian. So a majority of pupils perceived their national origin as predetermined by birth. Alongside this, there were 9 pupils who provided a range of responses to this question. For instance, Adela stated:

LP: Why is somebody Romanian?

Adela: It is because you have a whiter complexion, you are better.

Her response was rather surprising, as she was the only one who used an openly racist vocabulary to define her national origin, in which she conflates the categories ‘race’ and nation. One might add, that such ‘confusions’ are not uncommon in popular discourse. Furthermore, Adela’s comments point to the need to explore the wider, local context to make sense of researchers’ accounts collected within the school site. As Connolly (1994, p. 1) argues:

‘little if any attention has been paid to looking beyond the school gates to exploring how the particular locale has provided a site through which broader,

national political discourses on “race” have been appropriated and re-worked, and how, consequently, this has impacted upon the nature of social relations in the school’.

It is interesting to note that 7 pupils from the Hungarian cohort linked their national origin to that of their parents, responding to this question that they were Hungarian because their parents were. This response appears to be very close to the first group of responses in which they believe that nationality is acquired by birth. It is also surprising that only the Hungarian children used this response. This may denote that they have less confidence in their Hungarian identity and they seek to attribute their origin to mediating factors, such as originating from their parents’, that is, their ethnicity. Such social behaviour may be explained by their position of belonging to a national minority, confronted with a hostile discourse emanating from the majority (Szabó, 1996). This was in sharp contrast with the responses of the Romanian children who did not have complexes about their status and firmly asserted their national origin.

4. The ethnic composition of the group was revealed in the responses to question number 4: **‘Are you Romanian or something else?’** There were 31 Romanian and 20 Hungarian children. All of them gave very confident, straightforward responses to this question, without any hesitation. This might be evidence of their well-defined self-conception regarding national identity. They all assumed their nationality with a certain degree of pride, which could be registered from the non-verbal communication actions (no hesitation in their responses, dignified look on their faces). There were no non-

responses or confused responses. Similarly, no one described their identity in hyphenated terms, which is rather surprising, as there are a relatively high number of mixed marriages in the region. There was no Roma pupil in the sample, which reflects the schooling problems of this minority. The proportion of the Roma population in Romania is subject to controversial and contested debates. Some evaluate the proportion as high as 10% of the population, so it would have been a statistic possibility to have Roma children in the cohort of interviewed children. Unfortunately, many do not attend school at all; the few who do are confined to the 'problem' schools or the rural areas (see Gagyí, 1996). In addition, it would be difficult to find any statistics or monitoring of the population by reference to Roma origin. Schools and inspectorates monitor the ethnicity of pupils according to the language in which they are taught. Roma children would simply be included in Romanian or Hungarian language classes, as the provisions of teaching in Romani language is still at an experimental stage, being tried out in a very small number of schools and only at primary education level.

5. In relation to this question, I asked them about the origin of their parents. In all but one case, there was a strict correspondence between the national origin of the pupils and that of their parents. Again, it is surprising that so many came from homogenous family backgrounds. The only exception was Hermina:

LP: Why is somebody Romanian?

Hermina: Well I don't know, my mother is Hungarian and my father is Romanian.

LP: And you are Romanian or something else?

Hermína: I am Romanian, at home I speak Romanian.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from a single case, especially as there were no more prompts to clarify further the situation, but Hermína appeared to be adopting a survival strategy of assimilationism; coming from a mixed family, she decided to regard herself as Romanian instead of assuming a hyphenated identity. One can only speculate whether this was due to the fact that she was in a class where the majority of the pupils declared themselves to be Romanian and she didn't want to separate herself from the majority, or it can be ascribed to family influence ('at home I speak Romanian'), perhaps due to the dominating role of her Romanian father.

6. The next two questions were inquiring about the prevalence of Romanian language in society. It is important to emphasise that the divisions between national groups in Transylvania are primarily drawn according to linguistic differences. The question **'What language is spoken in this country?'** was asked only to the Romanian group. 28 pupils said that Romanian was the language spoken in Romania. Only 2 pupils responded that alongside Romanian there were other languages spoken in the country: Andra mentioned Hungarian, German and English, while Viorica knew about Hungarian and English. Hence, the majority of the interviewees perceived their country to be a monolingual space, ignoring the existence of national minorities, whose presence is asserted by the use of their languages. Cluj, being located in the heart of Transylvania, has a significant Hungarian population and also, some Germans still live here, in

smaller numbers. Therefore, it would have been expected that they were familiar with the existence of these languages in their immediate vicinity.

7. The next question functioning as a prompt to the previous one: **'Is Romanian the only language spoken in this country?'** challenges the predictable monolingual space through which the children conceived their country. This question was not asked to the Hungarian group, for the reason that they would have been fully aware that their language, Hungarian, is also spoken alongside Romanian. Only two of the Romanian cohort implied that Romanian is the only language spoken in Romania:

LP: Is Romanian the only language?

Laura: One can hear English, for instance at the airport, but they would translate into Romanian.

Mihaela: Well, other languages are spoken too, by tourists who visit the country.

Laura and Mihaela are not aware of the existence of minority languages in their country, the trespassing into the monolingual space comes from abroad, from tourist and airport facilities, again, intended for 'foreigners'.

The great majority of the Romanian group, 26 pupils, responded that Romanian was not the only language spoken in this country. It is difficult to reconcile this response with the previous one, where they denied the existence of other languages. A possible solution to this paradox may be that they automatically identify language and country, Romanian and Romania, thus excluding the different minority groups. When this

assumption comes under scrutiny, they might acknowledge the existence of variety in the linguistic space.

LP: Is Romanian the only language spoken in this country?

Daniela: There are other languages.

LP: Like for instance?

Daniela: English, German, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian, and Turkish.

Daniela's response was typical in many respects of her peers. She acknowledges the presence of Hungarians and Germans, as well as of the Turks (not present in Transylvania, only in a small proportion in the Southeast of the country). However she overstates this aspect and includes here English, Italian and Spanish. She conflates the actual existence of populations living in the country and speaking their language with the sporadic encounter with other foreign languages. In reality there are only a small number of English speaking people in Romania (businessmen, advisers, lecturers, missionaries *et cetera*), but they hardly constitute a linguistic group *per se* and on equal footing with the traditional minority groups such as the Hungarian and German or Roma population. The children might encounter Italian or Spanish speakers in the business community, and French, which used to be the second language of the upper classes and the intelligentsia, but is not used anymore. One other explanation may be that children included in this response the foreign languages they are learning at school. So, the languages that are taught as foreign languages (English, French, Spanish, and Italian) are extrapolated to the entire society, as some sort of second language, which

they are clearly not. It is an interesting misapprehension, which is revealing of specific problems in clearly mapping out the linguistic space of their society. Similarly, some of the interviewees identify the presence of other languages, but attribute it to occasional encounters with 'foreigners', such as tourists or immigrants:

LP: Is Romanian the only language spoken in this country?

Claudia: No, in our country you can find tourists who come here and they speak in their [own] language.

Andra: Not really, there are people who came from other places.

Hermia: There are foreigners who settled here.

On the other hand, some of the children have a clear picture of the situation and acknowledge the presence of traditional national minorities:

LP: Is Romanian the only language that is spoken?

Dorin: No.

LP: What languages are spoken?

Horațiu: Hungarian, Gypsy-language.

Mariana: People speak Hungarian, too.

Andrei: No, people also speak Hungarian, Turkish.

In short, most responses oscillated between a realistic appraisal of the situation of the co-existence of minority languages in a multiethnic Romania and an extension of this multiethnic society to an exaggerated multilingual one, probably incorporating the foreign language classes from the school curriculum or giving undue emphasis to personal encounters with 'foreigners'.

8. The next question, ‘What is the most important thing for you as a Romanian: your language, your parents, your religion, or the region you come from?’ was asked both groups and there were no significant differences between the Romanians and Hungarians. Everyone responded clearly; no one seemed to be confused. Only 3 interviewees did not know what to respond. The majority of the pupils perceived their identity as being shaped simultaneously by more than one factor.

LP: What is the most important thing in your identity as a Romanian: your language, your parents, your religion, or the region you come from?

Irina: All of them.

Alex: All of them.

Jutka: For me, all of them are equally important.

Such combined responses might also have been the result of indecision, but I did not feel it would be appropriate to pressurise them in choosing one category only, so no probes followed. In these combined responses, 21 pupils maintained that language was the most important element in their identity, 34 claimed that their parents were most important for them, 17 mentioned religion, while 10 indicated that the region they were came from was the decisive element in their responses. The fact that most responses placed parents as the determinant factor in establishing national identity relates to responses to question number five and the conclusions drawn there about the importance of the family in influencing the formation of national identity. Language also plays an important part in this process, with a somewhat higher frequency of responses among the Hungarian pupils (12 Hungarian pupils compared to 9 Romanian).

Religion is seen as less important, which may reflect the moderate influence churches have in contemporary Romania, due to decades of atheism of the Communist regime. Being a multi-denominational society, I did not ask any questions about which church they belong to, though I assumed that the majority of the Romanian children were Orthodox, some may have been Catholic, while the Hungarian pupils were either Catholic or Protestant. Only 4 children defined their identity exclusively in terms of their religious convictions. Also, regionalism, which is on the rise as a political movement in the country, does not seem to have any significant role in the construction of the pupils' identity. Only two of them considered region as the only factor shaping their identity.

It is interesting that this question, which can be considered as a multiple-choice question, generated a number of different responses (5 such responses):

LP: Which is the most important element for your identity as a Romanian: your language, your parents, your religion, the region you come from.

Oana: For me the important things are my family, my language and my country.

Grigore: My country.

Dorel: My country.

Mariana: My country.

Martin: That I am a Romanian citizen.

These pupils have themselves introduced the concept of 'country', more abstract than family, language, religion, or region. Such responses might be the automatic outcome of

a certain type of patriotic indoctrination, of a discourse frequently heard in school where the country is upheld as a supreme value. I do not believe that in this case the word 'country' functions as a summation of family, language, religion, and region. It is more likely an expression of a nationalist reaction. On the other hand, Martin's response that includes an even more abstract category, citizenship, is even harder to account for, but I feel it cannot be included in the same category as the previous ones.

9. The following question, **'Is it good to be a Romanian/Hungarian?'** received only positive responses. 18 pupils did not give any reason why is it good to belong to their respective national community, while 32 interviewees gave a whole range of different responses. I attempted to establish a typology of categories – as a heuristic device - in order to make a selection of the responses. One such category might be labelled the **'Nationalists'** as some of the responses were clearly generated by nationalist discourses, assimilated at school and at home. Here are a few examples:

LP: Is it good to be Romanian?

Cosmin: Yes.

LP: Why?

Cosmin: It makes us feel more proud.

LP: Why?

Cosmin: Because Romania is a very beautiful country.

Oana: Because it is a very beautiful and rich country, with many natural beauty spots and I like it a lot here.

Grigore: Because we have a very rich country, it has about everything you need compared to other countries that have only one thing. Romania is a rich country and has

everything it needs.

Sorina: Because it is good to be Romanian. Better to be Romanian than English or something else.

Alex: Just like that, you are Romanian and you are proud of the things your ancestors achieved.

These themes are recurrent, as the country is 'rich', 'beautiful', 'unique', its inhabitants must be proud to live in such a wonderful place *et cetera*. The pride in the present is accompanied by the pride in the past; in the heroic deeds of ancestors. It is very easy to uncover such themes of nominal patriotism which permeates the curriculum and to which the children have been exposed from the first day of their formal education. Again, it would be difficult to conclude to what extent they only repeat what they heard so many times or if they have actually internalised this discourse.

Another group could be labelled the '**Fatalists**'. They did not engage in an explanatory discourse about why is it good to be Romanian or Hungarian, but rather just accepted that they were Romanian or Hungarian and made the best of it. They perceived themselves to be privileged to belong to their respective nation, even if this meant living in difficult economic conditions.

LP: Is it good to be Hungarian?

Botond: Yes.

LP: Why?

Botond: Once you were born Hungarian, you have to be Hungarian all your life.

LP: Is it good to be Romanian?

Horățiu: Yes.

LP: Why?

Horățiu: Because I was born here and I like Romania.

Doina: Because if you were born in Romania, you wouldn't like to go away, however bad the country might be.

George: Yes, for me it is good because I am used to this place. Maybe if I weren't from here I would have said it wasn't so good.

Roxana: Because it is my nation, I was born here.

Maria: Because you are borne here, you grow up here.

Another group might be labelled the '**Linguistic Pragmatists**', they were mainly Hungarian and rationalised their bilingualism as a considerable advantage over the monolingual majority, while expressing an affective attachment to their language (Diószegi and Süle, 1990). As a national minority, these Hungarian children are compelled by the curriculum to learn Romanian as a second language. From their responses, this obligation was not perceived as an act of aggression against their identity; on the contrary, they were ready to acknowledge the advantage coming from knowing more languages, thus expressing superiority over their Romanian colleagues.

LP: Is it good to be Hungarian?

Gyözö: Yes.

LP: Why?

Gyözö: Because I love speaking Hungarian, I believe that the Hungarian language is easy.

Emöke: Because if somebody speaks Hungarian he cannot be understood by Romanians.

Erika: Because if you know Hungarian, you can learn Romanian from someone else, and then you know already two languages.

Zoltán: I love the Hungarian language, I have many Hungarian friends.

Árpád: Because you can go to Hungary and people can understand you there, it's not like when a Romanian who wants to go to Hungary has to learn Hungarian, which would be more difficult.

Katalin: If you are Hungarian you can speak Hungarian and you can learn other languages, like Romanian, English.

There is an interesting metonymic phenomenon in the responses coming from Hungarian pupils, in which they identify themselves with the more prosperous Hungary and place themselves in a superior position to the Romanians, linked here with the rather difficult economic conditions of Romania. This is another controversial issue in Romania, to what extent the Hungarian minority identifies with the 'mother country', Hungary, and to what extent is loyal to its host country, Romania (Diószegi and Süle, 1990).

LP: Is it good to be Hungarian?

László: Yes.

LP: Why?

László: Because you are richer than the others, you have more money.

János: Because you are not as poor as a Romanian.

I encountered a rather interesting response from Roxana in which she seems to use a balanced judgement regarding the advantages and disadvantages of living in her country. It would have been interesting to know what lies behind her self-consciousness of belonging to a people she regards as 'less civilised' than other people.

LP: Is it good to be Romanian?

Roxana: In a way yes, in a way no. Yes, because it's a beautiful enough country, a language beautiful enough. No, because people from here are very different from other people, they are less civilised than other people.

10. The question that followed is linked to the previous one asked the children **'What is the best thing in being Romanian or Hungarian?'** It functions as a prompt to enable them to prioritise between the elements that emerged from their responses to the previous question. From the cohort, 11 pupils were not asked this question, 3 did not respond to it, while 14 did not know what to respond. This is a relatively high number of 'don't knows'. It is possible that they could not provide alternatives to the one they have already given to the question 'Is it good to be Romanian?' Some of the responses were largely similar to those already encountered in the previous question:

LP: What is the best thing if you are Romanian?

Paul: The best thing is that we have a beautiful country and we can be proud of it

Andra: The best thing is that Romania is a very beautiful country.

Mariana: You can be proud of what your ancestors have achieved.

George: To believe in my country.

Irina: To love your country.

Also, some of the Hungarian pupils emphasised again the importance of the additional language and of bilingualism:

LP: What is the best thing if somebody is Hungarian?

Zsolt: He knows more languages.

Isabella: That he can speak other languages, not only Hungarian.

But some Romanian pupils also considered their native language as the best thing about being Romanian:

LP: What is the best thing if you are Romanian

Maria: The language.

Grigore: That I can speak Romanian.

Alex: You can understand almost everything. Everything is good.

However, some other responses reflect a nationalist or exclusivist mindset:

LP: What is the best thing if you are Romanian?

Andrei: The best thing is that in Romania where you were born there are more Christians.

Dorin: To be industrious, to be a believer.

Adela: You are better, more handsome.

Andrei and Dorin perceived their national culture in exclusivist terms, as a Christian land, while Adela uses somewhat racist arguments. Such views were rare and were not representative of the majority of the interviewed pupils.

It would be interesting to carry out further comparative empirical work, such as that of Carrington and Bonnett (1997) and Carrington and Short (1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999), to explore the continuities and discontinuities between as well as within Eastern and

Western European societies. An immediate contrast from an East European perspective is the assumption of critical western commentators that investigating such issues as racism is a central component of the educational research tradition. It may be that in particular locations, such as Northern Ireland or Scotland, in relation to specific topics, such as religious/national/cultural identities, critical researchers might have shared experiences with those of Eastern Europe of the difficulty of raising what are seen as controversial issues within school contexts. Though, such writers, as Carrington and Troyna (1988) might suggest that within a British context the notion of ‘controversial curriculum materials’ could encompass a much wider area, including here issues of sexuality, euthanasia, animal rights, ecology *et cetera*.

Among the interviewees, there were also some more ‘balanced views’ of what is the best thing about being Romanian, that are quite mundane and ordinary:

Diana: The best thing? There are many things. I like to be Romanian because I come to school and other things.

Claudia: To take care of your country.

Finally, there was a group who might be labelled the ‘Realists’, who had a more mature view of their country, but this might reflect a stance that could be read as a personal pessimistic view of the world, as it becomes apparent with Viorica:

LP: Which is the best thing that you are Romanian?

Roxana: It is good that you are Romanian because in a way you can be proud of your country, but sometimes not.

Angela: You are happy, even if the country is poor, what I have is enough for me.

Viorica: I don't think there is a best thing.

11. The last of this series of questions was **‘What is the worst thing if you are Romanian/Hungarian?’**. The question sought to test the extent to which the pupils had assimilated the overwhelmingly positive images and clichés about their country and nationality. In such a discourse there is virtually no negative trait in the nation and being part of this group has to be acknowledged as a privilege and so the question was used to explore if the pupils were capable of developing an independent, critical judgement about nation and country. The responses to the question were as follows: 5 pupils were not asked the question, 2 gave no response, while 14 did not know what to respond, 15 maintained that there was nothing bad about being Romanian/Hungarian. I can include in this group that expressed a non-critical view, the 14 interviewees who did not know what to respond and consequently, we have a majority of pupils who perceived their national group in exclusively positive terms, rejecting any critical conceptions. This goes even further in George's case, who assumed a radical patriotic stance, as he probably misunderstood the question:

LP: What's the worst thing about being Romanian?

George: Not to believe in my country, to disgrace my country.

But there were, nevertheless, a minority of responses who spoke critically about what it means to be Romanian: 3 interviewees mentioned poverty as the worst thing, while 5 assumed that the country was not ‘civilised enough’. Cosmin and Grigore were

dissatisfied with the external status of the country, being a small, unknown country, confronted with globalisation (dominance of English), while Doina touched upon a very difficult issue, the high inflation in the country at that specific time:

LP: What's the worst thing about being Romanian?

Cosmin: We are not so popular like other countries.

Grigore: That Romanian is not an international language, it is not spoken in other countries, like English.

Doina: The currency.

For some of the Hungarian children the question of the language frontiers came up again, in different forms:

LP: What's the worst thing if you are Hungarian?

Katalin: Is that someone cannot speak proper Hungarian and their speech is mixed up with Romanian words.

Erika: If we speak Hungarian and somebody pops up, he cannot understand what we are talking about. This is bad for the person who has just come there, because he cannot understand.

Ella: You have to speak Romanian in the shops and at the post office.

Katalin's position was very interesting: she was worried that her linguistic space might be contaminated by foreign influences. She voiced here the position of nationalist Hungarian politicians, concerned about the high rate and pace of assimilation of the Hungarian minority, while the erosion of the purity of the minority language, used in the environment of the Romanian majority, is seen as the most visible symptom (see

Szabó, 1996; Gereben, 1999). Speaking 'proper', meaning pure, cleansed language is a sign of being true to one's national group. But more often than not, eliminating the foreign elements from the language is just the first step towards a self-imposed apartheid of a minority, a rejection of any contact with the other. Ella's position was again expressing a typical revolt about the imposition of the majority linguistic space upon the minority. Not being able to use its language was seen as a major infringement of political and national rights, at the root of many of the ethnic conflicts that have erupted recently in Eastern Europe. Erika's concern with the other person who would not understand the conversation in Hungarian, speaks again of the dilemma of assimilation: the choice is either between assimilating and then speaking the 'other', that is, majority language (accepting the other) or isolating themselves, not speaking the 'other' language (rejecting the other) (for further details, see Girasoli, 1995).

12. The next two questions were used to measure the pupils' awareness of the presence of minorities inside Romania and to test their level of acceptance of the multi-national and multicultural society in which they were living. The first question was **'Is everybody who lives in this country Romanian?'** reformulated for the Hungarian group as **'What other nationalities live in this country?'** All the pupils were asked this question. There were no instances of no-response or 'don't know' responses. Only one said that the Romanians were the only nationality living in the country, while 3 said that besides the Romanians there were only 'foreigners' who came from other countries, like Daniela:

LP: Is everybody who lives in this country Romanian?

Daniela: No, there are people who have come from other countries.

As indicated in the introductory chapter, in contrast to the rich vocabulary about nation to which the Romanian pupils had access, the British pupils lacked basic concepts that would enable them to discuss issues of national identity. It was added, however, that the Romanian pupils had little access to critical discourses to begin to open up the concept of national belonging. This might result in their under-developed sense of pluralism in relation to different minority nationalities and ethnicities. Interestingly, in contrast, the British pupils, albeit living in a ‘mainly white’ city, as it officially represents itself (Nayak, 2004), had a sensibility of living in a multi-ethnic society. Within this context, the majority of the Romanian interviewees enumerated a number of nationalities. There was, however, as discussed above, some confusion between what are the representative nationalities living in the country, that is, traditional minorities, and the ‘odd foreign person’ encountered somewhere by the children. On one hand, the interviewees were aware of the existence of the traditional minorities and they enumerated those (Hungarians, Germans, Turks, Russians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Ukrainians), while on the other hand, they gave the same importance to individual members of certain nationalities present in the country, like the English, Americans, Italians or French. The only groups of ‘foreigners’ that have recently settled in Romania are a small number of Chinese and Arab immigrants, to whom the children refer:

LP: Is everybody who lives in this country Romanian? Are there any other kind of people living here?

Ioana: Yes there are, English, Spaniards, French.

Roxana: Yes, of course, Hungarians, English, French, Spanish. I have a cousin who lives here but she is Italian, but they moved here, all the family.

Irina: No, there are the Hungarians, I saw Chinese people on the street

János: Romanians, Germans, Hungarians, Arabs, Africans.

Daniela voiced an interesting perspective:

LP: Is everybody who lives in this country Romanian?

Daniela: No, there are people who have come from other countries.

LP: What kind of people?

Daniela: Turks, Hungarians, Bulgarians.

Daniela mentioned the presence of the traditional minorities, but echoed a widespread prejudice that these people have come from other countries and have not lived in Romania since the beginning of world, as the nationalist ideal would demand it. Her view placed people belonging to a minority outside the Romanian statehood, reducing them virtually to the status of 'foreigners', thus potentially denying them an equal treatment. However, there were pupils who had a clear picture of the ethnic composition of their country:

LP: Is everybody who lives in this country Romanian?

Oana: No, there are the Hungarians, the Roma, the Ukrainians, Turks. There are several nationalities that live in our country.

Andrei: There are Turks, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Russians.

Paul had a more complete picture in his mind, but he needed a prompt to remember the presence of the Hungarians and Germans:

LP: Is everybody who lives in this country Romanian?

Paul: No, there are other people, like tourists and foreign businessmen.

LP: And nobody else?

Paul: Also Hungarians and Germans.

13. The next question, **‘What are your feelings towards people who are different from you?’** was intended to inquire about interviewees’ experiences of, and responses to, those marked as other in the context of how we live with difference. As this question is linked to the previous one, I was attempting to find out how they felt about the groups of people of whom they have previously spoken. All the pupils were asked this question; there were no no-response and only one responded with a ‘don’t know’. There were 3 responses expressing negative feelings towards people perceived as different. The response from Grigore and Diana might be considered as xenophobic, echoing a well-known slogan of the nationalist, ‘Foreigners go home!’ while János’ stereotyping is more indicative of personal prejudices and Roxana emphasises cultural differences:

LP: What are your feelings towards people that are different from you?

Grigore: I don’t think it is a good thing that they come and live here. They should come and stay for a while, not all the time, to move here.

Diana: Well, I would like them to go to back home to their countries.

Roxana: Those other people are not exactly like us, they are completely different. We have our way of life; they have their way of life.

János: I am afraid of them. I don't get very close to them. I don't play with them. They are wild and they are fighting.

A majority of the pupils, 31 expressed positive feelings about the people they perceived as different. This might be read as evidence that feelings of xenophobia, prejudice, and rejection of various categories of different people were not widespread amongst the interviewees. More positively, there was evidence of a sense of openness; of a welcoming spirit towards the 'foreigner':

LP: What are your feelings towards these people who are different from you?

Georgeta: I respect them a lot because they are from a different country and they should see that in this country people respect each other

Mariana: I'm glad that they come and visit our country, I hope they like it.

Alex: If they live in Romania, I feel towards them as if they were my neighbours.

Isabella: I like meeting them, to know them.

A similar issue arises here as with the previous question: the confusion between ethnic minorities and 'foreigners'. It would have been useful to uncover whether this was a result of a confusion between the legal status of 'foreigners' as foreign nationals and the various national minorities who live in Romania and have Romanian nationality, that is, citizenship and a passport. But some of the responses did refer to the relationship between them and the national groups living amongst them, so the overall picture spoke of acceptance of difference as was evident in the occasional co-operation between the children (in playing of games):

LP: What are your feelings towards these people who are different from you?

Oana: I consider them as ordinary Romanians. They live in my country, so they are like my brothers, like the others

János: I'm not bothered that they are not Hungarian.

Göző: I play with Romanians too or with other nationalities, I just want to be able to talk to them.

Zoltán: I don't mind that they are here. I can learn from them, like languages or games.

Adela: I don't fight with them; I play with all of them.

There were also 12 responses that expressed children's indifference towards these people. This indifference did not seem indicative of negative attitudes, so again, one might exclude xenophobia and prejudice.

LP: What are your feelings towards people who are different from you?

Horațiu: I have no feelings.

Cosmin: I don't have either feelings of love or hatred.

Doina: I don't hate them, my feelings are normal.

George: I consider them just like me. They are people, too.

Levente: They too have to live somewhere.

14. The problem of difference reaches a critical point when questions are asked about the Romas: **'What can you say about Gypsies? Are they Romanian too? What are your feelings about Gypsies?'** The status of the Romas as a national minority or an ethnic group is still debated in Romanian political circles as well as among the Roma representatives. As a national minority, their status would imply a separate language - which they do possess -, but many have chosen a form of integration within the majority

population in the region in which they have chosen to live. They can live in areas with predominantly Romanian or Hungarian population and adopt either of these languages in everyday communication, while retaining their own language within the community. This makes it harder to be considered a distinct ethnic group, especially for the purpose of official statistics. Their status in the society is overtly racialised, being constantly confronted with different degrees of individual prejudice and institutional racism (Gagyi, 1996). Given their ambiguous status, it was interesting to see the pupils' accounts regarding the inclusion of the Roma in society at large. It should be noted that in none of the classes were there any Roma children, so I have no evidence of how much direct personal contact, if any, they had with Romas of the same age.

The responses to the questions inquiring about attitudes and beliefs regarding Gypsies were highly divided. Five pupils were not asked the question, while one did not know what to respond. 19 interviewees, mostly from the Romanian group (17) said that the Romas are actually Romanians. There is a difficulty in interpreting these responses: whether they can be considered as a sign of inclusion, of acceptance of the Romas into the larger Romanian group, considering them as equal members of their own nation or that the Romas are denied their right to a separate identity, due to a monolithic vision about country and nation. Such an interpretation can be supported by the obsessive reiteration of the 'indivisibility and unity' of the country and nation, a major political slogan both within and outside the school. Differences might not be acceptable and thus the Romas are reduced to the role of an ethnic group within the indivisible national

community. A similar conclusion might be reached in terms of the 5 responses that considered the Romas as Hungarian. A similar view was maintained by 12 responses that considered Romas as being both Romanian and Hungarian. Such a response might be explained by the fact that the Romas normally used either Romanian or Hungarian in their contacts with the national group that is dominant within the respective region, thus, some form of integration can take place, so it can be stated that language is seen in this case as the major marker of identity. So, one can conclude that a majority of the interviewees (36) were not aware of this dimension of diversity in their country and did not acknowledge the multicultural nature of the society. The assimilationist stance of these children might also emerge from their urban perspective: in cities the Roma population has been 'assimilated' to a higher degree, losing its traditional way of life, language and costume; while in a rural environment these aspects have proved more resilient. Only 4 of the interviewees acknowledged a specific Roma identity. This low percentage is not surprising if one considers the low level of acceptance of the multicultural nature of the Romanian society in general, as reflected in the political discourse that pervasively circulates through the media, and also the fact that there are no provisions in the curriculum for multicultural education, and virtually no mention of the Romas in any context. The result is a set of confused responses, in which the children tried to make some sense of their lack of information within a surrounding dominant context of prejudice. Sorina excluded them entirely from the country, reducing them to the status of 'aliens', while Emese spoke about a different 'race' of people. Gözö and Zoli were attempting to avoid taking a clear stance on the issue.

LP: What can you say about Gypsies? Are they Romanian too?

Sorina: Some are, some aren't. Maybe they have come from another country.

Maria: In some ways they are, in some ways they aren't. In some ways they speak bad things, but in some way they are Romanian, they have a nationality.

Emese: They, too, are a race of people.

Gözö: They have the nationality of their parents.

Zoli: They are of all kinds of nationality, mixed nationality.

15. After establishing the limits of exclusion and inclusion, the following question enquired about the pupils' personal attitude towards the Romas. In eight cases the question was not asked due to the particular development of the interviewing process. There were no instances of no response, one pupil did not know what to respond and one was indifferent about them. It was surprising that only three pupils expressed positive views about the Roma. George seemed most empathetic towards them, taking an anti-racist stand, and while Horațiu expressed a compassionate view, Irina expressed some egalitarian views:

LP: And what are your feelings about Gypsies?

George: They are people, too. If I were a Gypsy, I wouldn't like other people to tell stupid things about me.

Horațiu: I think they are poor.

Irina: The same feelings as towards the Romanian.

An overwhelming majority, 31 expressed negative views about the Romas, racial stereotyping, and prejudice, reflecting the general discourses circulating about the Roma in the wider Romanian society. It is undoubtedly one of the major problems with which

Romania is confronted, as many observers, human right watchdogs, as well as the European Union's annual reports about Romania have repeatedly pointed out (Marino, 1995, 1996). There were at the time virtually no anti-racist initiatives in the civil society, and no awareness of this problem in schools or in the curriculum. It may be suggested that the results of such policies were reflected in many of the pupils' responses:

Mihaela: I have mixed feelings. Some are dirty, they speak badly, they spit, so I don't have good feelings towards them.

János: There are too many of them.

Levente: There are many Gypsies, very many.

Enikő: I don't like them very much because they are dirty and dangerous.

Paul: I don't like them, they are not honest and they are dangerous, they can start a fight.

Ella: I am afraid of them. They are evil, they steal and they can beat you, they swear at you.

Roxana: I can't consider them exactly like a Romanian, or a civilised and honest person, but in a certain way they too, are people, even if they steal. They should go to a school to become civilised and to learn good manners.

Grigore: They are dishonest, they are evil and they bring shame on our country. They should stop stealing and start caring about their country, not only about themselves.

Most responses ranged in the same co-ordinates, using the same vocabulary of racial prejudice. There are some common themes illustrated here: János and Levente thought that there were too many Gypsies - an often-repeated slogan by the nationalists about the dangers lying in the high birth rate of the Roma community. Other concerns were about the fact that the Romas are 'dangerous', that they can start a fight and it is better to keep out of their way, thus avoiding any contact. Another accusation is that they

steal, are dishonest - an age-old prejudice against the Gypsies. They are perceived as dirty, not 'civilised', selfish, and bringing shame to the country. They are reduced to the status of outcast 'savages', who should be civilised if they want to become part of the society. The use of the word 'civilising' is strange in a country that had no colonial adventures, did not come into contact with peoples from overseas and had no mission of civilising other people. It is common currency in Romanian public opinion that 'civilising' the Romas is the only way to integrate or assimilate them in order to level out differences and strengthen the monolithic character of the country.

I interpreted some of their responses as expressing an ambivalent attitude, where children tried to negotiate a conditional acceptance of the Romas. Laura was trying to distance herself from racism, but nevertheless, she criminalises the Gypsies, while Anca condescendingly accepted that Gypsies, in spite of all, were 'people', offering the excuse of being poor. Sorina and Dorel, adopted conventional racialising divisions, in trying to make a distinction between 'acceptable' and 'beyond the pale' Gypsies, and not adopt an all-inclusive stereotyping standpoint, thus discriminating between 'good' and 'bad' Gypsies.

LP: What can you say about Gypsies?

Laura: About Gypsies? The Gypsies who are Gypsy in the sense that they are stealing and they are not like other people, good, I don't like them. But I don't have anything against people or children who have a darker complexion or they come from a Gypsy family, but are good children or good people.

Zoltán: I have nothing against them as long as they are not looking for trouble. But often

they want to fight and they would attack you.

Anca: They are also people too, but they are poor.

Sorina: I have different feelings. Some are bad, some are better.

Dorel: Some are good, some are bad.

Erika: In the same way they behave towards me.

Many of these responses were imbued with individual prejudice and racism, but they also speak in the subtext about the difficult living conditions of the Roma population. During the last decades, Romas have been marginalised, experiencing impoverishment in an already poor country, with many pushed to the limits of society, becoming engaged in criminality, petty theft and smuggling (Gagyi, 1996). The consequence has been that the resentment of the population has increased, scapegoating has become widespread, and the few anti-racist initiatives at a political level have not been translated into concrete policies. If we add together the negative and ambivalent responses and compare them with the only 3 positive responses, the picture looks very gloomy indeed. It is also worth noting that perspectives indicative of xenophobia are surprisingly low, so for example, these pupils do not have a problem in including 'civilised' people (that is, 'foreigners') in their group, while the tendency towards the exclusion of the Gypsies is extremely over-generalised.

16. The following two questions were intended to test how 'nation' is conceptualised in terms of inclusion. It also attempted to uncover, from a different perspective, what was seen as the most important trait that includes somebody in the national group. The question: 'How can a 'foreigner' become a Romanian/Hungarian?' was responded to

by many naming more than one necessary criterion to become acceptable as member of the nation. The question was not asked of two pupils, there were no instances of no responses or 'don't know' responses. A majority of the cohort, 29, claimed that a 'foreigner' must learn the language in order to become a member of the national group. These responses are consistent with previous responses where the importance of the linguistic borders was identified (see responses to question number 8). All 21 Hungarian interviewees mentioned that language was the main prerequisite to be included in the linguistic space. Once again, this provides evidence that Hungarians marked their different identity as a national minority through the use of language. A majority of the Romanian cohort responded that the way of becoming Romanian was through acquisition of citizenship:

LP: How can a 'foreigner' become a Romanian? What does he have to do?

Cosmin: First of all, he has to learn very well the Romanian language, in order to be able to speak with the others. He has to stay more years after that so he receives Romanian citizenship.

Paul: He has to come and live here and ask for Romanian citizenship.

Anca: He has to come into the country and change his nationality.

Daniela: He has to learn Romanian and has to live for two years in Romania, after that he can become a Romanian citizen.

Viorica: He has to be very good in order to receive Romanian citizenship.

Cosmin and Daniela seemed quite familiar with the legal procedures for obtaining Romanian citizenship, (that the person has to spend some years living in the country, after which he/she can apply for citizenship), though Viorica perceived it as bestowing

a privilege on somebody sufficiently deserving. Comparing these responses with the unanimous response of the Hungarian group (that knowledge of language confers membership of nation), one can draw the conclusion that the Romanian children, on the one hand, were more familiar with the legal notion of citizenship and on the other hand, that they expressed more confidence in their country, perceiving themselves as fully fledged citizens of Romania. As they placed the emphasis on belonging to a political community – the state of Romania – the Hungarian group perceived itself as part of the linguistic community – the Hungarian linguistic community. This allegiance to the linguistic community raises a number of questions, fiercely debated in the political arena of the country: the Hungarian language community includes also the neighbouring state of Hungary, thus the Hungarian minority living in Romania is accused of placing its loyalty with a foreign country. Local Hungarian leaders speak of a spiritual community with the 'mother country', of a cultural continuum between Hungary and the minority groups in the neighbouring states (Diószegi and Süle, 1990). This is a contentious issue between the two countries that might explain why the Hungarian children somehow reject the idea of citizenship in Romania. But it should be mentioned that there is little acceptance of the multi-national and multicultural character of the Romanian state by Romanian policy makers and the public, so in reality, there is little public space for members of ethnic minority communities in the 'bigger picture' of citizenship.

Of the other pupils, 12 of them considered that settling in Romania was enough to make someone a Romanian, while 7 said that the necessary condition for somebody to become

a Romanian or Hungarian was to observe the traditions of the country. Imagining the national community in cultural terms did not seem to be very common amongst the children, though some shared the view that culture and 'traditions'; the way of the land, is a determining factor in belonging to the national group. Roxana advocated integration, Irina was of the opinion that 'when in Rome do as the Romans' do', while Oana was quite explicit in privileging culture and patriotism:

LP: How can somebody become Romanian?

Roxana: He has to adapt to the way of life from here. That is, in my opinion.

Oana: He should adapt to our culture and to love this country.

Georgeta: First of all, he has to learn the language, then to observe the traditions of the country.

Irina: To behave like the Romanians, to speak Romanian.

Only a small minority of 4 pupils claimed that it could not be possible for a foreign person to become Romanian/Hungarian. Hermina and Mihaela considered that the quality of being a Romanian was acquired only by birth, while Grigore did not believe that somebody could become a 'real' Romanian, in spite of becoming a citizen of the country:

LP: How can somebody become Romanian?

Hermina: He should have a father or a parent Romanian and than he is a Romanian.

Mihaela: I don't think so; he has to be born here.

George: A foreigner cannot be Romanian in any case. He cannot become Romanian from here, if he comes from a different country

Grigore: Legally, he has to stay a number of years, so he could have dual citizenship, but he cannot become a real Romanian.

17. The next question was a follow-up to the previous one, asking the pupils about who can become a member of their national group. Twelve pupils were not asked this question; there was no instance of no response or 'don't know' response. 35 interviewees maintained that anybody could become a Romanian or a Hungarian, which testified to the inclusive conception of these children regarding the affiliation of others to their national group. Again, this group of children did not exhibit feelings of xenophobia, confirming the results obtained in question 13. Only 5 expressed reservations about the possibility of accepting 'aliens' as members of the national group. Georgeta insisted on the possible assimilation through the use of language, while Emöke and Zoltán were sceptical about anybody being able to master the difficulties of the Hungarian language and thus being included inside the linguistic space. Grigore was consistent with his previous position that nobody could become a 'real' Romanian. (Hermina, Mihaela and George, who rejected in their previous response the possibility of somebody becoming Romanian, have not been so consistent, responding that anybody could become a Romanian). Adela set the condition of admission to her national group on linguistic mastery:

LP: Who could become a Romanian?

Georgeta: Hungarians for instance, if they would learn the language better.

LP: Who can become Hungarian?

Emöke: Well, not everybody.

LP: Why?

Emöke: Because there are people who cannot pronounce all the words properly.

Zoltán: Anybody who can learn the language because it's not an easy language.

Grigore: People who are born in Romania.

Adela: Anybody who speaks Romanian.

18. The next question, **'Is it a good thing that in Romania there are other nationalities?'** was not asked of 4 pupils, there were no cases of no response and only 3 did not know what to respond. Only one pupil gave a negative response, without giving any reason for it. There were 38 positive responses, 16 of which responded only with a laconic 'yes', without elaborating any further on why it was good that there are other ethnic groups in Romania. But among the 22 responses where a reason was given, the pupils gave a plethora of arguments in favour of a multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic society:

LP: Is it a good thing that in Romania there are other nationalities?

Daniela: Yes.

LP: Why?

Daniela: Because more people can see what Romania looks like.

Dorel: I think it is a good thing because they grew up here, they have friends here who love them.

Cosmin: Yes, because they can learn from us good things and we can learn good things from them.

Andra: Because Romania is a big enough country and there is enough place for everybody.

Horațiu: Because they help us achieve different things.

Diana: Because there are more languages.

Mihaela: Yes, because they can build a lot of things, like the Americans who built so many new things here.

Maria: Yes, because there are many things you can learn from different people.

Isabella: Because you can learn other languages, not only Hungarian.

Zsolt: Because there is a greater variety of people.

Zoltán: Because like this you can meet more people and make more friends if you want.

Csaba: Because the country has many different nationalities and this can be an advantage.

Zoli: Because people can do business with people from foreign countries, like the Chinese.

Ella: Because it is more interesting to have other people around.

These responses provided evidence that the pupils were generally consistent in rejecting exclusionary visions of the society. It is more surprising that they were able to see the advantages of an open society when the curriculum does not provide any elements of multicultural education and in their daily life they are faced with nationalist, exclusionary discourses.

To what extent these responses were accurate reflections or that they were what the pupils assumed that they were expected to respond is difficult to evaluate in this specific nationalist context. This issue becomes even more acute when we consider the frequent occurrence of racism with reference anti-Gypsy sentiments. There is probably dissociation between the perceptions of the acceptable 'other', such as the national minorities, 'foreigners' and the unacceptable 'other', the Romas, which accounts for this contradiction. I presume that the pupils are sincere when they speak about the

advantages of a multicultural society, because their arguments seem spontaneous and genuine, but at the same time, they unconsciously excluded the Romas.

19. The last question, **‘How could you explain to a foreign tourist who has never seen a Romania/Hungarian, what a Romanian/Hungarian is?’** proved to be the most difficult. It was asked to all the pupils, one did not respond to the question and there were 10 who did not know what to respond. Also, 10 did not understand the question and gave a confused response. The number of those who did not know what to respond alongside those who gave confused responses testifies to the fact that the pupils perceived this question as difficult. The rest of the responses ranged between being born in Romania (11), speaks Romanian/Hungarian (11 - with a majority of Hungarians choosing this response) and lives in Romania (7). Many did not define a Romanian in a single term, but preferred a combination of two or three of these elements. They proved consistent with previous responses in which they conceptualised national identity mainly in terms of birth or language. 17 of the interviewees gave a different range of responses, categorised as ‘other’:

Georgeta: A Romanian is a person who believes in God, who has a job, is well educated. That would be all.

Cosmin: A Romanian is, now this depends, he can be good or bad, who used to have in the past folk customs, from the villages, now they are more modernised, he used to wear traditional folk costume and we are famous in many countries for the folk costume that we used to make in the past.

Oana: A Romanian is a civilised person who loves his work, his country, and his

religion; is very attached to his family and loves nature.

George: We are people, just like them. Unfortunately, poorer. This would be all.

Enikő: I would tell him that it is a person who speaks Hungarian, who goes to church, who has a family and a job.

Zoli: A Hungarian is somebody who speaks Hungarian, lives with other Hungarians and has a Hungarian family.

One may conclude here that, these responses did not add many 'new' elements to the defining characteristics of what it means to be Romanian/Hungarian. Georgeta, Oana and Enikő were the only ones who mentioned religion as part of their national construct, while Georgeta and Enikő referred to employment as the necessary condition, and Cosmin invoked lost cultural traditions, while Oana spoke about the allusive notion of being 'civilised'. Probably the most intriguing response came from George, imbued with a pessimism that was not characteristic of his peers.

2.5.1. Identity as internalised propaganda

For many of the children interviewed, national identity seems to be expressed in the same clichés as those used by the perennial nationalist propaganda. I can recall the same vocabulary and imagery used during my school days at the height of the Communist phase of the nationalist propaganda. But glancing over textbooks from before the Second World War, the same imagery and vocabulary was being used to inculcate patriotic feelings in pupils. From learning by heart various slogans to ubiquitous visual displays in the school environment, concepts of Romanian-ness conceived by the powers of the day, were an ever-present accompaniment of the normal learning process

for generations of pupils. Going beyond this biographical evidence, Mitu (1997) analyses various instances of national identity formation in the context of Transylvanian Romanians and points out the role the education system has played in it, starting with the dawns of modernity in the late 18th century. This particular form of identity (i.e. the identity of Transylvanian Romanians) has been adopted later by the whole country and simultaneously by the official propaganda.

The main features of this identity were relational, defining Romanians in relation to others, whether in opposition – to Hungarians and Slavs, for instance – or in kinship with others – Ancient Rome, contemporary French and Italians. Attributed and imagined characteristics of these ‘others’ were seen as either desirable and thus shared by Romanians, or upheld as negative characteristics and in that case, the opposite was true for the Romanian nation (for a more detailed discussion, see Mitu 1997). In this context, characteristics such as honesty, hard-working, Christian (especially of Orthodox denomination) were presented as particular features of the Romanian character, while physical traits (noble, handsome, endurance *et cetera*) were traced back, for instance, to their Roman ancestors. The purity of the nation was emphasised in the persistence and originality of its traditions, maintained especially in the villages, in costume, folk traditions, songs, customs and diet, as repository of the best and purest elements of the nation.

The legitimacy of the nation in more recent years has also relied heavily on the theme of the ancestral village. The Communist regime had a strange oversight in its modernising

tendency that was meant to eliminate everything old and replace it with the new Socialist values, and somehow glorified the uncontaminated traditions of the village. Idealised images of rural life are presented to children in textbooks and it seems likely the children from an urban background would appropriate such images.

Another favourite depiction of the nationalist propaganda is the country as self-reliant and self-sufficient. This became a particularly salient theme in the 1980s during the paranoid phase of the late dictator, when the regime was isolated internationally, both from its traditional allies in the East and from its friends from the West (United States and France). The country was depicted as rich and beautiful, having all the necessary natural resources it might need to develop its economy. But this also could generate the envy of others who would like to lay claim to these riches. Another germane theme was the hospitality of the Romanian people: they are open and welcome everybody, but this hospitality is in turn abused and the once welcome guests can turn into occupiers and enemies. Such reasoning could be found to underlie the xenophobic and isolationist strand of the last decade of the Ceaușescu regime, materialised in powerful propaganda directly aimed at its real or imagined enemies inside and outside the country (for a more detailed discussion, see Verdery 1991).

As pointed out in the Literature Review, it was possible to detect at the time of my data collection numerous signs of continuity with some practices of the previous era. Attitudes and beliefs of the teaching staff and policy makers have not changed as radically as it was stated in policy documents, and nationalist indoctrination was still on

the agenda, as this became clear in analysing the interviews. The pupils in my sample would use concepts that I could easily recognise as those promoted by the nationalist propagandists, so it is clear that there is a continuity with previous practices, as these children have been born after the collapse of the Iron Curtain. It must be pointed out that the school is not the only source of the nationalist discourse: mass media, political discourse, family, and Church.

2.6. *Critical reflections*

A serious shortcoming of the data collection in Romania was the lack of deeper probing into the meaning of the responses of the interviewed cohort. I did not go beyond the framework of the questionnaire and the method, i.e. semi-structured interviews and interpreted this in a rather rigid fashion. This can be partly accounted by the fact that the initial intention was to follow a more *quantitative* data analysis method that required more rigorously structured answers. Also, I did not want to engage in topics that might be seen as controversial by parents or teachers. Consequently, I rarely asked the question 'What do you mean by...?' that could have elucidated to what extent the expressed views have been internalised by the children.

It must be pointed out that there were a series of other shortcomings in carrying out this fieldwork. The two major limitations of the study were: the short time allocated to data collection and my lack of experience in data collection, particularly interviewing children. The timing of the research was very unfortunate, as it was the beginning of the

school year, with staff busy sorting out administrative tasks and the pupils not used to the conditions at their new comprehensive school. Teaching was in full progress, so it was difficult to have longer interviews with the pupils during the classes and it was virtually impossible to interview staff. There was on my part a certain shyness in approaching other members of the staff except the form masters. The initial intention was to interview staff teaching relevant subjects such as History, RE, Geography, Literature, but it did not materialise, mainly because most of them were very busy and probably unwilling to stay overtime to talk to a researcher.

I feel that my lack of experience at this stage affected upon the quality of carrying out the interviews. I carried out a fixed schedule, with very few probes and prompts. My major concern was to finish as many interviews as soon as possible, instead of focusing on in-depth discussions. A fundamental question can be raised here concerning the method of data collection, whether semi-structured interviews or ethnography would have been the most suitable method (Marcus, 1986). At the initial stage, it seemed more reasonable to use the semi-structured interviews for the reasons mentioned previously, but in retrospect, an ethnographical approach would have produced higher quality data. However, due to the short time and relatively high number of pupils interviewed, semi-structured interviews seemed the most appropriate solution in these conditions.

A critical overview of the interview schedule is necessary here. It was conceived for Romanian children and adapted to be used with a group of Hungarian pupils, which

meant that certain questions were left out and in certain cases, rephrasing were needed. This procedure undermines the qualitative analysis of the data with responses from slightly different questions grouped under the same heading, thus affecting the accuracy of the analysis in relation to children's knowledges, experiences, and meanings.

During the interview, one further controversial issue appeared constantly which was not taken into account while constructing the interview schedule. There is no question addressing the relationship between Romanians and Hungarians. Both groups were asked the same questions, but they were not asked a specific question in which they were given the chance to speak about each other. The primary reason for this was that the interview was conceived in order to investigate children's conception of national identity and not interethnic relations between Romanians and Hungarians. But in the local context, these two phenomena are inseparable. Difference is immediately conceptualised along these lines, yet the questions that inquired about pupils' understanding of difference and otherness did not take this into account. Only the Gypsies were mentioned in a separate question, in an attempt to address the question of racism. But quite often in the children's responses, the tension between Romanians and Hungarians was quite obvious, so it would have been useful to have had the same inquiry into the two groups' views about each other. It became clear that the Hungarian pupils were defining themselves through language differences in opposition to the Romanians. In addition, Romanian pupils were not always aware of the presence of

national minorities in their country and misinterpreted the questions when asked about otherness.

A serious ethical issue can be raised here: I did not challenge any of the racist or nationalist views expressed during the interviews. There were no follow-up questions, no probes into what they actually meant by those racist or nationalist comments. I decided that it was neither the right place nor the appropriate time to mount a challenge on racism and nationalism. Also, I was apprehensive of the fact that raising such delicate issues might put the research in jeopardy, as staff or parents could have misinterpreted it. Whether this overcautious position was right or wrong is open to debate (see Griffin, 1993, for an alternative view). However, in this specific context, speaking about such issues might have had the effect of reinforcing such attitudes in the children, but the dilemma remains unsolved. The questions should have been asked, but I could not take upon myself the task of undertaking the necessary anti-racist and multicultural education during the interviews, especially in a context where such provisions are not even included in the curriculum and the school has no initiatives in this direction. In a situation where probably many - here including staff and parents - might share nationalist views, alongside the curriculum emphasis on values, such as 'patriotism', 'loyalty' and love of one country, it would have been risky to mount a challenge during the interviews.

A critical view of the analysis and especially of the interpretation of the responses is also required at this point. I have started this research and especially this data collection in Romania with a certain degree of bias towards the outcome of the inquiry, as described in the introduction the thesis. Being overly familiar with the practices in the Romanian education system relating to teaching issues about national identity, I have probably abandoned a certain prudence in interpreting the responses of the pupils, as recommended by Lewis and Lindsay (2000). As the responses have concurred with my expectations and were in line with my political agenda, I have taken at face value everything the children told me. As the interviewing was conducted in a fairly disciplined fashion, rigorously following the interview schedule, I could not engage with deeper meanings and thus be more tentative and nuanced interpreting the responses.

This ethical question needs to be located within a wider theoretical framework as explored in the literature chapter, with reference to the advantages of a comparative methodology, of adopting and adapting within Romanian society British analytical frameworks on race and racism. Compared to the absence of theoretical work in Romania in this field of inquiry, British anti-racist and multicultural interventions can be seen to be rooted in the range of theoretical frameworks provided by Weberian and Marxist perspectives. Most particularly, these perspectives have been important in identifying questions of structural power, while at the same time, alongside other new social movement political projects, such as feminism and gay/lesbian liberation,

providing a vocabulary that enabled the mobilisation of minority ethnic groups to challenge politically their shared subordinated position in British society (Mirza, 1997). Although western accounts of class cannot simply be applied to contemporary Romanian society, nevertheless the paucity of theoretical understanding of racism remains a serious barrier to its modernisation, in terms of racial equality, for example, in relation to the experiences of the Roma population. Indeed, Rex's definition of a 'racialised underclass' could be productive in explaining the social subordination and cultural marginalisation of the Roma, which the children above had difficulty in discussing. Equally important such a theoretical underpinning might help to develop the concept of critical multiculturalism, as it has in the UK.

Interaction with the Roma population has always been fraught with difficulties in Romania as well as in the rest of Eastern Europe. Historically, the Roma in the Southern and Eastern provinces of Walachia and Moldavia have been kept in servitude until the early 20th century. Before that, a majority of the Roma in these territories have been in a state of semi-slavery, serving life-long indenture periods to their local landlords, even if they have chosen a migratory life-style. Liberation and emancipation came gradually as Romania accelerated its modernisation before and after the First World War, but the vast majority of the rural Romas have not been able to escape a state of dire poverty and marginalisation up to the present day. The contemporary context offers a mixed picture: previous generous state benefits under the Socialist regime have been long abolished, together with the more unsavoury practices such as forced settlement, cultural

assimilation and compulsory employment on state farms. Lack of qualifications and ghettoisation are creating very serious handicaps for a population that already suffers from other social and economic problems. The economic reforms modelled on Neo-Liberal principles and geared towards opening up the country to globalisation do not create any provisions for the most vulnerable categories, the Roma being the most numerous of them.

The media images and public discourse has demonised the Roma and has deployed the entire panoply of accusation that reduces the Roma to the position of an undesirable underclass. The process is one of racialisation and is constantly reinforced by the 'moral panics' generated by the media, as the Roma are accused of criminality, over-breeding, ruining the country's image abroad, spreading diseases and poverty *et cetera*. The situation is becoming more acute as for the first time signs saying 'No Gypsies' have appeared in shops and pubs, and in some instances whole groups of Roma inhabitants have been subjected to pogroms, their houses being burned down, some of them killed, and the entire population from some villages have been chased out. There was and is prompt reaction from the central government to stop and punish such acts, but local authorities have a much more laissez-faire attitude. (for a more comprehensive discussion, see Gagyí, 1996)

The children I interviewed have grown up in this atmosphere where such attitudes and practices have rarely if at all, been challenged. The difficult transition to democracy and

market economy meant that the daily survival of the majority of population in conditions of economic deprivation and political insecurity, took precedence over moral or ethical concerns regarding equality and fairness in society. More powerful and politically astute groups, such as the Hungarian minority, have managed to put their concerns on the political agenda and obtain a number of concessions, but the state of the Roma population did not allow this sort of advocacy. More recently, the prospect of European integration and the fear of the West of the illegal migration of millions of Romas have raised the issues in several forums and it has become one of the dominant themes of politics in Eastern and Central Europe.

The role of anti-racist policies in education would be to take up these challenges and foster a national identity that is inclusive of the Roma and not one that defines itself against them. This is especially important, as the majority of Romas would describe themselves as *Romanians* or *Hungarian*, not as *Romas*, which clearly indicates their desire to be included in the national in-group. Developing a comfortable national identity that is inclusive of these Romas who see themselves as Romanians or Hungarians, as well as accepting those who wish to maintain a separate identity, is not made easy by the new *de facto* segregation that exists in most schools (but not only), as none of the schools I have researched had any Roma children.

The suggestion of Romania learning from class-based analyses of racial inequality may appear strange, at a time when within a British context, they tend to have been erased.

However, more recently, some scholars have argued for the need to revisit earlier structural explanations and to rework them within the context of contemporary cultural theories about subjectivity, culture, and diversity (Brah et al., 1999a; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993; see Rex and Mason, 1986). It is suggested that cultural theories of difference could productively be fused with the analytical frameworks that focus upon state power, institutional life, and collective social change. In so doing, such an approach with a sensitivity to socio-historical understandings of the impact of racial discrimination on key public institutions of employment, housing and schooling would be able to develop a more comprehensive account that would make sense to a younger generation who have shifted from a class based (industrial) society to a multi-stratified consumer based risk society (Giddens, 1991). A major advantage of such a critical synthesis of new and old theory is the opportunity to trace the explanatory power of the continuities alongside the discontinuities of analytical frameworks. For example, such a continuity might be identified between Rex's Weberian-based culturalist approach and contemporary cultural theories, in arguing for the significance of linguistic and symbolic meanings in racially divided societies. Most significantly, in relation to Romania and the UK a reworking of earlier theories of the interconnections between class and race within a contemporary framework of multiple social exclusions including gender, nation, religion *et cetera*, might help generate a more optimistic political vision. This is important at a time when the global appears to be overly determining what people feel they can achieve at a local level, in terms of building a more equal society marked by the

elimination of social divisions, national/ethnic exclusions and cultural marginalisations (Bradley, 1996; Savage, 2000).

3. Fieldwork in England

3.1. *Choice of site and access*

In contrast to the process of gathering data in Romania, where I was familiar with the educational system, the content of the curriculum and the context of the school from where data was gathered, the research site in England presented a high degree of novelty. This materialised in a certain degree of difference between the methods used in the two societies: while in Romania familiarity (alongside institutional expectations) allowed for a more closed, formal interviewing process, in England I needed to allow for a wider scope in the approach to the site, as it was an unknown cultural terrain. Consequently, the fieldwork took on a more qualitative style, where I was interested in all aspects of life within the site and where I needed to acquire a thorough understanding of it prior to beginning the interviewing process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The central element of this approach was to understand the institutional culture of the place and extract meanings from the everyday context (Haywood, 1996). Practically, this necessitated that I spend much longer in this school compared to the limited period of time I needed to carry out interviewing in Romania. Hence, it was necessary that I be allowed considerable freedom, in terms of the length of my stay and movement within the school.

One other important factor in choosing the research site was due to the ethnic composition of the school. As the pilot study had been conducted in a multiethnic school in the West End of Newcastle, I had to reconsider the validity of that study in the context of the aims of the thesis. First, as my thesis developed to focus on the conceptualisation of national identity, including here the particularities of regional identities, the school was unrepresentative of the ethnic make up of the region. Nevertheless, the choice of the site was motivated by the close links established with the Education Department at Newcastle University, as the school was very welcoming of researchers and other academic staff, so it represented an ideal environment for me to make first contact with English educational system. Having a high number of children belonging to ethnic minorities, (in my sample, 41% of the respondents were non-white) clearly did not represent the region which has the lowest number of ethnic minority population in England. Also, the fact that many of the interviewees were children of asylum seekers and refugees, with limited knowledge of English, would have a detrimental impact on the quality of the interview material. In addition, children of recent migrants, having been in the UK for a very short time, would probably respond to the question about national identity by referring to their country of origin. (For a more detailed presentation of the process, see above Section 6: Pilot Study in the Methodology Chapter.)

Despite these initial assumptions about possible shortcomings, the pilot study proved to be useful beyond the usual 'dress-rehearsal' effect. Some of the responses have

anticipated the themes that would emerge later from the main data collection. Language and origin of parents seemed to be the major determining factors on motivating a specific national identity. Regional identity was mentioned once, while most of the recent migrants' children still described themselves according to their country of origin.

LP: What are you?

Marjory: English.

Samira: Iranian.

John: British and Scottish. But also Geordie cause I was born here.

LP: What makes a person British?

Marjory: You speak the language. And you got to school there.

John: You are born like that. Cause your mum and dad are like British.

Some of the other questions (How does someone become British?; What does it mean to be British?; What is good about being British?; What is the best/worst thing about being British?; Are some people more British than others?) have generated surprisingly little usable responses, so I interpreted this as a sign of being difficult or inappropriate. The interview schedule (see below) was constructed with these experiences in mind, so I rephrased some of these questions or used various prompts during the interviews, to make sure that the questions resonate with the conceptual world of the children.

Another question generated some interesting answers:

LP: Is anyone living here British?

David: No. There is Samira and her dad. And then Huo. And then there are some people

where I live I don't know where they are from...

Danielle: And Mohammed and he has another brother. And Huo...

David: And Marie! She is from Africa!

It seems that they were unable to conceptualise categories and see people belonging to distinct groups, but were only pointing out concrete individuals in their immediate environment. There were, however, no statements of any kind that could have been seen as racist or prejudiced, although, the continuous presence of a teacher in the classroom might account for the fact that the pupils were giving cautious and brief responses to my questions, not to mention the fact that they have only met me that morning.

The choice of the main research site had already been restricted by the above-mentioned conditions. In order to fulfil these and to facilitate access, I was advised to try to gain access to a school that had a longstanding and good relation with the Education Department of Newcastle University. Following this advice, I approached one such school in Newcastle with a letter asking for a meeting with the head of the school in order to explain the purpose and methods of my research. Unfortunately, after a rather lengthy wait, my request was refused and the possible reason was that the school had already granted access to one other researcher from our Department. Another unsuccessful attempt followed, to a very similar school, neighbouring the first one, but here the gatekeepers never got back to my supervisor or me with any reply.

Both schools were thought to be very suitable sites for research, as regarding their ethnic intake and the socio-economic positioning of their catchment areas, they largely reflected the ethnic and socio-economic mix of the area. Hence, it was quite disappointing that less suitable sites had to be considered. Following the same lead, of using links between the Department and schools in the region, I approached the head teacher of a middle school from Castlevue-on-Tyne (pseudonym, due to the small size of the actual place which would make the anonymity of the participating school precarious), which is a small town a short train journey from Newcastle. Having to conduct research in a school that was not exactly in an urban environment and having to travel some distance seemed initially rather discouraging, but later it proved to add to the advantages of choosing this particular site. Also, the fact that I was granted unlimited access to the school (temporally and spatially), with unusually generous provisions (help from teachers, secretaries and classroom assistants) provided the necessary impetus to overcome the initial disappointment.

3.2. Description of site and positioning of the researcher

Wakefield Middle School in Castlevue-on-Tyne is located in a town on the outskirts of the Tyneside conurbation. The school has received positive reports from Ofsted and has some subject areas that were qualified as excellent. It has an intake that is more representative of the town, as the pupils come from both the socially deprived former council estate (about 30% of the pupils) and the much more prosperous villages nearby

Castleview-on-Tyne, as opposed to the other schools which have their catchment areas in either one or the other of these extremes. The school is overwhelmingly white, the only ethnic minority pupils were two girls of Chinese origin, the children of the owner of the local Chinese restaurant and take-away, a fact that was pointed out on several occasions by several pupils during the interviews. The school is under the control of Local Educational Authority, namely the local County Council. This accounts for the specificity of the school that it is part of the three-tier system, still in use at the time of the research, as the local county was at that time one of the very few places where this system still survived. As a middle school, it has pupils from year five up to year eight (from 9 to 14 years old). The initial selection of the intake is from the local state primary schools.

The first phase in my fieldwork was discovering as much as I could about the town itself, about the quality of housing, the range of facilities, such as shopping, leisure, and social life in general. This was carried out both by checking quantitative data about socio-economic realities of the place and by observation, walking around the local community at the end of the school day. Finding out about the recent history and economic situation of the inhabitants of Castleview-on-Tyne seemed important, as it would give me a clearer understanding of the pupils' background that would help position them socially and culturally. Familiarising myself with the local geography proved to be productive in understanding many of the references that pupils made later on in the research.

Castleview-on-Tyne used to be a large colliery village near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but today none of the mines has survived the economic restructuring of the area. This resulted in modifications of the physical landscape and the employment profile of the place. There is little industry in the town, most of the people work in either Newcastle or some northern market towns, and more prosperous urban places near Castleview-on-Tyne, but large numbers of people are still unemployed. The town presents little visible signs of extreme poverty or decay associated with some areas of the post-industrial North East. However, in contrast to this former mining community, the surrounding villages of Northumberland have preserved a higher level of prosperity, reminiscent of a past grounded in agriculture. Such differences were clearly visible in the physical environment, such as the quality of housing in central Castleview-on-Tyne as opposed to the neighbouring traditional villages that have maintain their rural charm and now are attractive locations for well-off Tyneside commuters. These differences arose very often during the interviews with the pupils or in conversation with members of staff, mainly as a geography of hierarchical rivalry.

Negotiating access to the school was very easy and informal, as it was completed on a collegial basis within the Education Department at the University of Newcastle. Obviously, this was a great advantage and helped me get in the school very quickly. However, the second phase, negotiating access within the school proved to be more difficult. This is a different process from getting past institutional gatekeepers and it was

fraught with specific difficulties, as pointed out by Walford (2001), mainly as the reluctance of teachers to let in the researcher, motivated by:

The negative views that teachers hold about the usefulness of research, the increased fear of surveillance by external 'experts' that has resulted from Ofsted and Key Stage testing and the increasing number of other researchers already in the schools a result of the growth of masters and doctoral students undertaking research as part of their more school-based teacher training. (p. 35)

I had very similar experiences with many teachers, as only a few were there when the head introduced me in the staff room and granted me full access to all activities of the school. After that, I had to explain to the rest of the staff why I was there. I detected sometimes in the case of one or two of them some visible discomfort at having me observing the class, despite the incessant reassurance I was giving about the purpose of my presence.

As I was trying to understand the institutional ethos of the school, I decided to sit in during all subjects, even during those that appeared to have no obvious direct relevance to my research, such as science classes. This had the additional benefit of allowing the pupils to familiarise themselves with me. As Walford (2001, p. 63) points out, the subjects of the research will automatically assign a role to the researcher, I was trying very hard to tell everybody what I was *not*, rather than what my role was. I had to insist in front of the teacher that I was not evaluating teaching methods or class management, as I was constantly welcomed by a barrage of apologetic remarks about problems

around the class or discipline. In addition, I wanted to reassure the pupils that I was not a teacher and had no intention of disciplining, examining, or making them feel uncomfortable in any way.

My strategy with the staff was not always successful, as in some cases I was received with either polite reluctance or painful self-consciousness, in both cases I had to give up going to the respective teachers' classes. Only in one case was this detrimental to my research, as one of the staff, who found it difficult to have me in the room, was teaching English. Debates about cultural issues and politically sensitive matters are explored in speaking and listening lessons. This added to my disappointment, as I would have been interested in attending some of these lessons. On the other hand, the pupils had little difficulty in accepting me as a non-teacher adult because they focused on the fact that I was coming from Romania. Discussing where that country is and what it is like was a productive way of establishing a friendly relationship with them and also gave me the opportunity of providing a cultural resource in terms of stimulating talk, for instance when talking about difference, other nationalities or foreign places.

As Skelton (2001, p. 65) notes: 'Schools are busy places, and it rapidly became apparent when negotiating access to classrooms that my teaching experience was part of the "bargaining" process'. In order to facilitate my integration into the school, I offered to help in whatever capacity they needed me, such as supervising classes, working as a classroom assistant, lunch supervisor or giving some tuition in French or IT. As none of

these offers was taken up, I still felt I should prove useful in some way to the school, so I decided to put together a PowerPoint presentation about Romania, that would be both informative and entertaining for the pupils. Also, this would serve my research purposes, as will be explained later on. I decided to stay the entire summer term and spend about half of the time just observing the life of the school and allowing myself to become 'invisible' to the pupils. In addition, this period gave me the chance of getting to know pupils, and of learning their names and friendship circles, in preparation for the interviews.

Later on, an unforeseen factor proved to be both an impediment and a relative advantage for me. For the first few weeks, I was the only outsider in the school, but very soon a PGCE student appeared and shortly after another doctoral student came to conduct research in the same school. The fact that all three of us were coming from the same university Department, but had been unaware of each other's initial intentions might be an indication of a serious lack of communication that could have had negative consequences on our work. A relatively small school had become suddenly 'over-researched' so, we needed a lot of co-ordination not to disrupt each other. On the other hand, this had the advantage of dissipating the air of novelty and strangeness around researchers, as pupils got used to having us around. I think that I benefited most from this, as my stay had been the longest in the school and I conducted my interviews after the other two researchers had left.

3.3. *Observation of institutional life of the school*

The main purpose of the initial observation phase was to enable the pupils to become familiar with my presence and also to familiarise myself with the ethos and culture of the school. But my secondary purpose was to look for all possible data that would feed into my inquiry around national identity. This meant in many ways a sort of detective work, sitting in on lessons, observing, and interacting elsewhere like the library, the lunch-break, and sports day. I was looking for posters or any other material that would give me an obvious clue about the kind of vocabulary teachers might utilise in talking about issues around nationhood, national identity, or citizenship.

I adopted a systematic approach that led me through every classroom, in order to inspect all the displays and available teaching materials and pupils' work. I managed to uncover only two classroom displays that might have a slight connection to what I was looking for: in the room used for teaching English there was a board on which the pupils put together a collage of cutouts and drawings about the Blitzkrieg and next to it some materials inspired by the television series, *The 1940s House*. These were the only items that could relate to a debate around history or national identity, as the Second World War has been used so often as a potent symbol of Britishness. The other classroom that seemed to present some interest was used to teach Religious Education and had a display of different religious objects belonging to various faiths, with an Islamic praying mat and a Jewish praying shawl in a prominent place. I interpreted this

display as an attempt to indicate something about the multicultural or multi-faith nature of contemporary Britain.

My next step of inquiry was sitting in on as many classes and as many subjects as I could every day. Again, this was intended to enable the pupils to get used to my presence, but also to observe what was going on during classes that I thought might relate to the issues I was interested in. I was not expecting any revelation from the science classes, so I used them to observe the pupils, to try to learn and remember their names, to see the friendship links between them and also their interaction with the teacher. As I did not have to focus on the content of the lesson, I was able to concentrate on collecting data about the behaviour of the pupils and the teaching style of the staff. This strategy proved effective, as the pupils did not see me at any time during the process as another teacher, they have become more and more familiar with me. Sometimes informal conversations were initiated by a few people about my country of origin or what was I doing in Newcastle or questions that are even more personal. I told them that I was a student and was conducting research and I answered the best I could their other questions.

The school had a rather disciplinarian style in dealing with pupils and the teaching was mainly teacher centred. Most classes were being taught from the distance of the board and most of the teachers' communication with pupils was rather authoritarian. I did not see one lesson where debate between pupils themselves or with the teacher took place.

On the other hand, a lot of the time and energy of the teachers' was spent on disciplining pupils, sometimes for minor offences. In addition, the lack of intellectual involvement of the pupils during the lessons eventually led to boredom and then to disciplinary problems, so this might account for the large amount of time spent on disciplining pupils.

After the first few weeks, I decided to sit in only on subjects that I thought would have direct relevance to my interest, such as English, History, Religious Education and Geography classes. However, it was disappointing that during the summer term; most of the teachers had decided to dwell on few topics relating to British interests. History classes were dealing with North American Indians, in Geography they were learning about Bangladesh and France, while in English most of the time was spent on extra literacy activities. Only during Religious Education did the pupils learn about Islam, but mostly in the context of Islam as a world religion. It was interesting to hear that the few pupils who had any knowledge about Islam acquired that knowledge on holidays, for example, they had seen mosques while being on holiday in Turkey. In spite of the fact that the teacher made some attempts to say that Islam was a religion practised in Britain, most of the pupils seemed to retain the idea that it was something exotic and foreign.

There was no other occasion when any aspects of contemporary British society were discussed in any sustained way, just as there was no mention about the history of the country. This presented me with a difficulty in setting out to do the interviews, as I had

virtually no starting point or reference to something that they were doing during classes that might help start a conversation around the concept of national identity.

British cultural theory has written extensively about the conceptual significance of absence, or more specifically the 'absent-present' (Dyer, 1997). So, for example, post-colonial theorists, in discussing national identity formation have identified the importance of the 'absent-present' normative whiteness against which blackness is unconsciously defined and regulated (Gilroy, 1993). Within this context, I found it most difficult to make sense of this systematic absence about British/English national identity within the formal curriculum. Politically, a range of contemporary responses could be identified in response to this absence, from the extreme Right lamenting the lack of promotion of patriotism, to liberal claims that this is a good practice, illustrating British benign nationalism and its self-consciousness about any flag-waving, with which I identified in Romania before beginning this research project. However, conceptually, the pedagogical implications of this absence are more complex. As is more fully explored in the literature review chapter, one explanation is that within Britain, issues of ethnicity, national identity and citizenship are elided with questions about racism and (black) minority ethnic communities and more recently, asylum seekers/refugees. Interestingly, in contrast to the highly differentiated political positions adopted by the British in relation to racism, ethnicity, and cultural belonging, they implicitly share a common conceptual position, operating with the black-white framework of colour racism. It may be suggested that an unintended effect of this limiting couplet is that the Anglo-ethnic

majority remain invisible to themselves. Hence, whiteness, Englishness, Britishness or Europeanness does not carry the symbolic value of black minority ethnic communities, as manifested in the curriculum materials and classroom displays in the school. Hence, in Newcastle, which represents itself as 'a mainly white place', it is officially assumed that there is no need to develop educational initiatives around issues of national identity and modern modes of citizenship. Further academic work is urgently needed in this area to develop our understanding of what cultural anthropologists refer to as a central methodological question: What is going on? (Marcus, 1997).

As explored in the literature chapter, post-colonial theorists offer a starting point, arguing for the urgent need to go beyond the black-white model of racism – the colour paradigm. Rather, they suggest a move towards a paradigm in which cultural, ethnic, national and religious identities are foregrounded. This involves rethinking a more complex map of diverse histories and geographies of social closure and cultural exclusion as defining elements of the politics of race and nation in Romania and the UK. More specifically, this move suggests the need to shift beyond what might be referred to as the Americanisation of British race-relations - the colour paradigm - to a critical engagement with European explanations, focusing on questions of nation, nationalism and migration (Wieviorka, 1991; Silverman, 1992; Kiberd, 1996). This shift beyond the modernist black-white dualistic model serves to critique the long academic tradition of 'over-racialising' selected groups of 'non-whites', while deracialising the Anglo-ethnic majority and white minorities. A main issue that has tended to be underplayed in the

literature on racialisation and racial inequality is the collective subject position of whites. This operates within a hegemonic logic in which 'whiteness' is absent to the 'racial majority', who assume that racialisation is 'something to do with blacks'. Whiteness as a key signifier of dominance has become the unexamined norm, while also, as Bonnett (2000a, p. 4) maintains 'whiteness is always enacted in association with class and gender'. Hence, the white children in Newcastle appeared to have little access, through the education system, to a vocabulary to speak about their own ethnic identity and accompanying limited concepts about issues of belonging to the nation (Dyer, 1997; Woodward, 2000). At the same time, as vividly illustrated by the male pupils, their translation of issues of cultural belonging is spoken through a gendered lens, for example the primary association of Geordies with the masculine world of football.

3.4. The interview schedule

I decided to use semi-structured interviews because it allows flexibility over the range and order of the questions within a loosely defined framework (Stake, 2000). As the questions were conceived and put to the pupils, I had more control over the interview, as it was not completely predetermined. Using a whole range of different questions (open, closed) and also allowing me to introduce prompting and probing when needed, I could achieve a more open discussion than with a rigidly applied questionnaire. The best interviews always resulted from a high level of interaction between the group of pupils and me.

I elaborated something of a scenario for talking to a group of pupils. After we settled and the first hurdle (seeing the tape recorder and starting the recording) had been overcome, I started by asking a question about their past holidays abroad. **‘Have you ever been abroad? Where?’**, trying to introduce the concept of foreignness. **‘What was it like? What other people were there? What language did they speak?’**

The next question followed from this: **‘When other people asked you where are you from, what did you tell them?’** Another question was: **‘What are you?’** (Reference to nationality, as opposed to other kids who might be Spanish, German, French etc). A probing question sometimes followed: **‘Could you have said that you are English/British/Geordie?’** With these questions, I was trying to find out where they locate themselves on the continuum of national-regional identity. The next question was trying to see if they could explain the difference between these labels: **‘What is the difference, say, between somebody who is British or English or Geordie?’** This question was more of a probe to the previous line of inquiry.

By now, the discussion was firmly grounded around the topic of inquiry, so the following questions were asked, in no particular order, as I allowed the conversation to flow naturally up to a point at which I could introduce any of them. The questions were: **‘What makes a person English?’ ‘Are you English or something else?’ ‘Are your parents English?’** while ‘English’ could be replaced at any time in the interview with whatever they suggested at the beginning, for example, that they were (that is, Geordie,

Scottish, British etc). I was trying to see where they placed themselves and what were the markers of identity, as well as what accounted for this identity and how it was produced. I was looking for an inventory of attributes that would express the nature of the national identity they had chosen. If I thought the responses were not clear enough, I introduced the question: **‘If I say ‘English’, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?’** In addition, I asked them to close their eyes and literally tell me what was the first thing or things they saw when I said the word. An alternative question to this was **‘What is the most ‘English’ thing you can think of?’** Here, I was more openly looking for symbols or clichés about Englishness.

The next questions were **‘Is it good to be English?’** and **‘What’s the best thing about being English?’**, as the responses might give me an insight into what value they attributed to their identity. Depending on the responses, I might include the opposite question, **‘What is the worst thing about being English?’** to see if they had any critical take on the national group they declared to belong to.

The next group of questions focused on the delimitation they have imposed on the group to which they had decided to belong, that is, the exclusion and inclusion mechanisms, as well as the categories on ‘strangers’ they have developed. The questions were meant to clarify the limits between the in-group and the out-group, as well as the criteria for belonging especially to the out-group. I introduced the topic with the question: **‘Is everybody who lives in this country English?’** and then follow up with

more detailed questions like ‘What other kind of people live in this country?’ ‘How can you tell if somebody is English?’ and ‘How can you tell if somebody is not English?’

The last question I used was ‘How could you explain to somebody foreign – like me, for instance – what an English person is?’ and it was intended to give them the opportunity to summarise what they had said or to rethink and change their minds after the discussion had taken place. At this stage, they could, for instance, agree or disagree with whatever they or anybody in the group had previously said, change their minds or add something completely new. Obviously, this would not reflect necessarily initial accounts, but I wondered if it might be more like the result of a brainstorming exercise that reflects the participants’ accounts *after* the group discussion. This was of interest as the pupils had very few opportunities to talk about these topics at school. I felt that such an opportunity as this would allow them to go beyond a more quantitative approach to that of a qualitative-based discussion, enabling them critically to discuss and clarify a number of ideas and convictions that they held.

Not all the questions were asked to all the pupils in every group. After a while, it became clear that this would either lead to repetition and tedium, or that after the first response had been expressed with a certain degree of forcefulness, the other pupils may have already internalised it. So, if they had no input to the conversation when a certain question was asked, I did not insist that each of them should reply to it.

3.5. *Carrying out the interviews*

As I developed an awareness that the pupils would not possess many points of reference in talking about nationhood, I attempted to set up a scenario that would introduce concepts and elements of a vocabulary that might facilitate the interviews. I wanted to present them with the symbols and images of a different nation that might begin a process of comparison with their own national background. For this, I created a twenty minutes PowerPoint presentation about Romania, based on images and my commentary. It may be suggested that I was inviting them to be active participants in practising a comparative methodology to enable a discussion of (their) British/English national identity formation. The presentation included many typical symbols of statehood (that is, map, flag, official coat of arms, and national anthem), plus a selection of statistics about Romania (that is, population, area, climate, ethnic composition *et cetera*). After each item, I tried to elicit from the children some comparisons between Romania and Britain, leading them to point out similarities or differences. The presentation included a section about Romanian language, which the children found particularly enjoyable, as they asked me to pronounce the words or to translate their names into Romanian. I believe that this was the most salient factor that marked difference and determined for them what a Romanian person was. I was asked several times, before and after that particular presentation, to say or translate something in Romanian.

The rest of the slideshow consisted of images of cities or rural spaces, landscapes, tourist destinations and images of people, in everyday life or in traditional costume. Nothing was seen as too exotic or unusual, so I took time to point out similarities (for example, commemoration of soldiers fallen in wars that takes place under an Arc of Triumph as opposed to the Cenotaph in London, *et cetera*). Finally, there were two stories, mainly as entertainment, one of which was about the Dracula myth in Transylvania, a sure hit with all the pupils. I repeated the slideshow three times, in three different classes. Pupils who had seen the show once asked permission to come and see it again with their peers who were seeing it for the first time. Usually this meant that they already knew the responses to my questions and the punch lines to the story.

One ethical concern emerged here: by presenting them such images, was I putting ideas in their heads and encouraging them to stereotype, and to think in essentialist terms? There was a clear risk in this direction, that the intention to make available a vocabulary would, on one hand, introduce or reinforce nationalist prejudice, and on the other, to 'contaminate' the sample before actually starting the interviews. I do not believe that any of these threats actually materialised, as the novelty of the content and the media was such that the children were completely captivated by those two aspects and they did not relate or translate any of it to their own reality. This became apparent during the interviews when none of the respondents used anything that seemed to have been generated by or appropriated from the slideshow. The questions they asked me were

inquiring about certain idiosyncratic aspects of life and culture in Romania or the Dracula myth.

I decided to use group interviews. I felt that particularly given the age of the interviewees, they might feel more secure and at ease, and thus, in relaxing, to jog each other's memory and thoughts (Powney and Watts, 1987). The main disadvantage was the potential for dominant individuals 'to take over', leading to a reduction in the time devoted to each individual or that there might be people who were not comfortable talking in groups. I began the first interviews one week after, so as not to be directly under the influence of what they had seen or talked about. I decided to conduct group interviews, with two to three, and on rare occasions, four pupils. The selection of pupils for the interview at the beginning was carried out by the teacher, but after a while I had the feeling that some teachers were 'getting rid' of the more boisterous pupils for one hour by sending them out to talk to me. Later on, I decided to choose the pupils myself and usually I chose one pupil who then had to select one or two of his/her friends to accompany him/her to the interview. When I launched the question 'Who wants to come for a chat?' nearly all the class raised their hands. Already knowing some of the pupils, I selected one of them and then they brought along a group with more or less the same personality, and consequently, in such groups the conversation proved to be much more dynamic, pupils being at ease with each other.

The interviews were conducted in empty classrooms, in the library or any other place I could find where I could ensure some privacy for our conversation. This resulted sometimes in wandering around the school for a few minutes with a group of pupils, looking for a suitable place. After settling down, my main concern was to make the recording of the interview as inconspicuous as possible. Although, as Walker (1985) maintains, the use of a tape recorder is often seen in a complimentary light by the person being interviewed, as the interviewer is providing a platform for the respondent to express himself/herself, I felt that it had an intimidating effect on many of the pupils. Some of the pupils did not realise that actually such an interview meant being recorded on a tape and felt somewhat shy or reluctant to talk. To overcome this, I devised a strategy to start the interview without attracting too much attention to the tape-recorder, so I showed them some unusual Romanian banknote made of plastic sheets that could not be creased or torn and had a very different design from the pound. This proved to work as a distraction and as an introduction to the interview itself, as the first question was deliberately chosen to inquire about their experience with foreign countries (during holidays) and the potent symbol that is a national currency. Also, I was trying to discretely remind them of the slideshow about Romania. I think the strategy worked, because the conversation started and the children completely forgot about the tape recorder, being occupied with the strange banknote. In addition, it enabled me to introduce the theme of holidays and foreign lands.

3.6. *Data analysis*

After I transcribed the interviews and read several times the transcripts, certain themes and motifs began to emerge as possible patterns for content analysis. A pattern of these themes and motifs emerged in all the interviews, so it could be seen as consistent with a possible analysis framework based around them. I was critically exploring how identity is expressed, what markers are used and what groups are constituted around these identities. Within this context, three distinct themes seemed to emerge: one relating to identity within a social context, two, relating to language enactment and three, identity versus ‘outsiders’. Within the social context, details emerged around various motifs such as class, profession, leisure, consumption, and regional rivalry. Some of these motifs reappear when talking about language: class and regional rivalry were frequently mentioned, together with a series of oppositions of Geordie/English, Geordie/American, *et cetera*. Alongside these emerging themes, I was interested in critically examining the relations to and the definitions of those who were not members of the group. More specifically, I set out to interrogate: how open or inclusive the in-groups were, what constituted the markers of difference and to what extent was difference seen in racialised terms.

In contrast to the analysis of the interview transcripts from the Romanian data collection, I did not follow a question by question approach in grouping responses. Due to the fact that the interviewing in England was less rigorously structured and was

allowed to follow up leads that might have brought in other, possibly relevant information, the data was more amorphous. Themes and motifs emerged here in a more organic manner as the following analysis highlights

3.6.1. Identity within a social context

Within an Anglo/US context, the question of identity has emerged as one of the key dynamic concepts in terms of rethinking social change in shifting from industrial societies to consumer-based late modernity. As Bradley (1996) argued in *Fractured Identities: Changing Patterns of Inequality*, socio-cultural change is marked by the disintegration of older social collectivities – such as social class – and increased fluidity of social relationships, with an accompanying interest in identity, culture, and subjectivity. More specifically, Hall (1992) has written extensively about a pluralisation of identities involving processes of fragmentation, dislocation and loss (Hall, 1992). Alongside these recent cultural theorists, late modernity scholars have suggested that western societies are experiencing a surge of individuation, in which globalised change is bringing an end to the constraining influence of social class and other forms of industrial society (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). It is claimed that late modernity is characterised by an increased capacity for cultural reflexivity, as individuals are impelled into decision-making, negotiation, and individual strategies about every detail of how we live together in multi-cultural societies. As argued above, one of the major limitations of contemporary cultural theories is that they fail to engage empirically with the social world. Hence, their theories remain untested. In carrying out fieldwork in

England, I found such theories about identity formation useful as general frames. But an empirical investigation of national identity among school children serves to illustrate a more complex social reality. For example, the late modernity theorists are making claims about reflexive subjects, but failing to address the institutional contexts in which such reflexivity is constructed.

In my empirical work, a first line of motifs became apparent as social constructs reflecting indicators of social, economic, and professional status, with an added element of gender. Consumption and leisure also became relevant markers of identity in this context.

As I have already indicated above, I phrased the questions to encourage the children to think about the concept of the 'other' in relation to ethnicity or race. However, it became problematic to follow this line of enquiry when most respondents were not able to recall significant situations when they encountered 'others' of different nationality, ethnicity, or race. The strategy behind some of the questions at the beginning of the interview was intended to highlight such situations, but this strategy failed as most children had little exposure to such contacts. When going abroad, most of them spent all their time socialising with other English tourists on the package holiday tours and had little or no contact with other nationalities or the locals:

LP: When you go abroad, where do you tell people you come from?

Karen: Newcastle.

LP: And do they know where Newcastle is?

Karen: Yes. Cause they are from England and know where Newcastle is.

LP: When you go abroad, do people ask you where you come from?

David: Sometimes. But people know cause I usually wear a Newcastle United top.

For many, the holiday destination was usually America and in this case again, due to the commonality of language and the familiarity with the culture, there was little scope for encountering radically different national identities or seeing themselves in foreign contexts that required a deeper exploration and definition of their own identity.

Asking about contact with people of a different ethnicity in their hometown was ruled out from the beginning as statistically the area has a very low population of (non-white) ethnic minorities, with most of them being concentrated in large urban centres and not small towns such as Castlevew-on-Tyne:

LP: Are there other people living in this country?

Sharon: Like other nationalities. Not many. Got Chinese and Indian, but not loads and loads like in the West End of Newcastle.

Within the locality and the school, there were only three children who could be identified as being non-white. However, it became apparent to me that none of the interviewees would mention them unless specially prompted:

LP: What about Castlevew-on-Tyne? Are there other people living here? Or in this school.

David: Yes, there is a family and their Dad has a take away shop. They are Chinese I

think. They come to this school but in different year. And the little boy is probably still in first school.

Another child later identified himself as being 'half English, half Malaysian' during the interview. This came to me as a surprise as his difference was clearly not visible, speaking with a heavy Geordie accent and being one of the older, more boisterous boys.

Unexpectedly, many of the children based their idea of the 'other' not on ethnic or racial differences, but rather on the social geography of the locality. They gave many examples of the 'others' – the socially undesirables, the 'Charvers', - the people from failing or disadvantaged council estates in Newcastle or Castlevue-on-Tyne (for example, the Castlevue-on-Tyne Fort Estate). Some children mentioned the tramps or the beggars on the street and the homeless as a significant category of otherness.

I noted that the children repeatedly referred to the 'Charver' and I argue that they repeatedly earmarked this group of people as an internal 'other'. Children from the lower socio-economic groups were anxious to differentiate themselves from the undesirable Charver by pointing to a completely different set of values and norms. Although to a casual observer the interviewees might be regarded as belonging to the lower working class they wished to emphasise their distinctiveness from the more socially disadvantaged segment of a similar social group.

Within this cultural context, the Geordie Charver appeared like the more established social figures of the Liverpudlian 'Sally' or the London East End 'Cockney'. For a more accurate definition, I cannot do any better than the description given by one of the children:

Kim: Somebody who hangs around at bus stops and telephone boxes, smoking, drinking. They will have fringes and caps. And earrings, most of the time of not proper gold. And they usually take drugs and smoke and drink. That's the definition of a Charver.

Throughout the interviews with the children, I discovered that they made a marked insistence on the criminalisation of the Charvers as the main sign of difference between the groups. In their view, Charvers are the root cause of society's ills, such as: fights, stabbings, drunkenness, drugs usage, and other anti-social behaviour. Nayak (2004) differentiates between what he calls 'Real Geordies' and Charvers, the former being respectable, hard working, lower-working class, while the latter represent a contemporary version of the Victorian 'undeserving poor', vividly described, by among others, Young and Willmott's (1962) *Family and Kinship in a East London*. He suggests a process similar to that of racialisation of the Charver is performed by the 'Real Geordies', as a result of socio-economic exclusion and cultural marginalisation experienced by the former. It may be argued that the Charver fulfils the function of the absent ethnic minority population in the region, as it is constructed as such a minority, with a visibility beyond skin colour. The street level visibility is expressed in specific clothing, while the social and economic segregation can be pinpointed in the

ghettoisation of certain estates where they live, as a geography of exclusion (Campbell, 1993). Further differences are evident in certain cultural practices (popular culture, leisure activities, *et cetera*), but also the emphasis on work ethic, as most Charvers are perceived to be either unemployed, unemployable or on benefits. In contrast to this, Geordies emphasise the importance of hard work, honest living and working class traditions (Colls, 1992). Writing from a late modernity position, outlined in the work, for example, of Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992), who suggest a defining feature of 'new times' is the disembedding of individuals from social structures, most particularly, in England, social class. My empirical work provides evidence of a main critique of these writers. Namely, they have failed empirically to test out their macro-theories that remain at a high level of abstraction. Giddens and Beck in suggesting that late modernity has produced reflexive subjects marked by individualism, have failed to ask a basic sociological question about which social groups and which individuals have adopted this reflexive position, or in Lash's (1994) terms: who are the late modernity winners? Furthermore, he suggests the late modernity scholars lack a theory of power that would enable them to explain the social continuities in class divisions and affiliations among, one might add, North East working-class communities.

The sharp divide that is presented by the interview cohort between themselves and the Charvers is consistent with what Nayak (2004) describes as the 'racialisation of the undesirable underclass by the respectable Real Geordies' (p.103). According to him, Charvers can never be Real Geordies, 'distinguished carriers of an archetypal industrial

whiteness' (ibid.). The Charvers are positioned at the centre of a triangulation of circumstances that places them at the borders of whiteness as socially excluded and economically redundant (ibid. p. 104). Their image in media reports and popular discourse is constructed not as victims, but as trouble-makers. Nayak explores the subculture created by the Charvers and the reactions it generated in the public and concludes that:

The subcultural values attributed to *Charver* style are indicative of the racialisation of a lower working-class corpus as dirt-ridden, smelly and ragged. Moreover, *Charver* parents are seen as state parasites who purposely have large families in what is regarded as both an expression of their unrestrained sexual libido and a calculated attempt to claim extra child benefits. In this sense, a dichotomy between *Real Geordies* and *Charver Kids* is enacted, a split that separates the 'rough' from the 'respectable' echelons of the working class. The 'moral panic' concerning *Charver Kids* associates them with theft, robbery, car crime, disease, dirt and over-breeding. These social indicators of 'deviance' are seen to have an historical resonance that draws upon a Victorian fear of and fascination for the city and the peoples who inhabit these central zones. However, for many *Charver* families, these are lived responses to the uneven nature of globalisation and inter-generation unemployment. (p. 104, author's emphasis)

It is worrying to see such a deep-rooted process of racialisation and exclusion among the children. From a political point of view, it is surprising and worrying that the school has not noticed these attitudes and has not engaged with them. This could be explained by the fixities of exclusionary paradigms on the binary black/white relationship. If the Charvers belonged to an ethnic minority, it would be inconceivable for the authorities to

leave unchallenged such attitudes. This invisible opposition, however, has inescapable consequences on the very same black/white paradigm as it creates the conceptual categories for an essentialised and discriminatory view of society, all within a perfectly acceptable context of white-on-white opposition. It becomes an imperative necessity to engage with this phenomenon as soon as possible, as schools have a major responsibility in addressing negative perceptions of all categories. So far race and disability have been high on the agenda of anti-discrimination initiatives and rightly so, while social class together with sexuality have featured only sporadically.

This social picture was confirmed by a few additional follow-up questions used in some of the groups, asking about their desired profession in the future. A trend emerged amongst the boys, with joining the army a very popular choice for many of them. Becoming a footballer was another popular choice amongst the boys. This trend was confirmed when I looked through the collection of Year Books of the school, documenting previous generations' memories, amongst which was a question about their career choice. There was no identifiable trend as regarding a professional choice among the girls. Also, when asked the question: **'What's the best thing about this place?'**, several responses emphasised the importance of work:

Karen: That you can find good jobs if you want.

Steven: When I finish school, I can find a job here. There's lots of jobs at [a local business park].

These accounts might reflect an exaggerated optimism about the economic situation of the region and the availability of skilled jobs. However, they reaffirm the centrality of work to the identity formation of local youth, even after deindustrialisation in the local region (Nayak, 1999, 2004). This can be illustrative of a complex process among the boys of change in the collective self-representations of dominant forms of Anglo - masculinity, around questions of Englishness, whiteness, social location and cultural belonging, alongside the material and symbolic systems and practices that produce this ethnicised gender position that is not named as such (Mac an Ghaill, 1994a). Possessing a major investment in traditional images of regionally engendered working class identities appeared to prove stronger than the surrounding economic reality of a post-industrial society. The challenge to masculinity posed by the new economy of service-based jobs appears to be responded to by relying on the few 'truly masculine' opportunities left open: joining the army or a career in professional football. Although the latter might be explained as reflecting more common aspirations fuelled by popular culture and practices, joining the army represents a traditional form of finding paid employment by local men in time of economic hardship (Colls, 1992).

Further themes emerged about identity formation expressed in terms of leisure and consumption (du Gay, 1996). Particularly among girls, the shopping at the Metro Centre was seen as 'the best thing' about living in the region. Boys would refer to football as the most obvious choice, but also would mention the drinking culture of the region, that is

the nightlife in Newcastle's Quayside and Bigg Market. Also, the local leisure centre came up amongst the boys as a positive feature of the locality:

LP: What's good about this place?

Lisa: We have the Metro Centre. It's really close on the train.

Tracey: And the Metroland! I go there every Saturday with my mum.

Laureen: The Quayside in Newcastle is the best place for fun. Tho' there are a lot of fights. And on Bigg Market. It's really wild on the weekend. All the Geordies go there!

Tracey: Yes, they cause a lot of fights. When they're drunk they always fight.

Football is an integral element of the regional male identity (Skelton, 2000). Supporting the local team, Newcastle United FC, is the cornerstone of local working class identity. This is expressed by wearing the black and white striped tops outside school and a whole arsenal of merchandise with the NUFC logo in school (bags, caps, scarves, pens *et cetera*):

LP: What does it meant to be a Geordie?

Colin: You support Newcastle. You are a Newcastle fan.

LP: So what's special about a Geordie person? Except language.

Kevin: They support Newcastle United.

LP: So somebody from Sunderland would not be a Geordie because they support Sunderland?

Kevin: They'd be Mackem. If you are Geordie and if you support Sunderland, you still be a Geordie.

This motif of a complex local or regional identity came up several times, as being routed in both football and geography. Most children were supporters of Newcastle United and

identified themselves as Geordies, while the obvious foil would be the Mackems (that is, inhabitants of Sunderland) and supporters of Sunderland FC. This created a problem as Castlevew-on-Tyne and thus most children are south of the River Tyne, so they would not qualify as 'proper' Geordies (somebody who is born north of the River):

LP: Are there big differences between Geordies and Mackems? Do they like each other?

Dean: No. We sing stuff about them at football. [...] sometimes they would make figths, really bad. [...]

LP: Would there be other differences, except language and football.

Dean: They would be friends if there wasn't for football.

Also, the theme of regional identity around Geordieness was presented in opposition to a larger category of Englishness, that is, coming from other regions of the country, mainly seen as London, or Scotland, due to its proximity:

LP: What other people live in this country?

Cheryl: English and Scottish. And Irish.

The main aspect that emerged from this section was that the dominant form of identity especially amongst the male pupils tended to be expressed in a regional variant of masculine, white, working-class identity, that is, the 'Real Geordie', as Nayak (2004) defines it. Social class was a strong marker of identity, with the collective adoption of a juxtaposition of the respectable working class against the 'undeserving poor', the Charvers, alongside the 'posh people' of the suburbs or other parts of the country. This identity is reinforced by a traditional, nostalgic, attachment to specific professional

choices and work ethic, and supporting the local football team in opposition to its local arch-rivals.

3.6.2. Identity enacted in language

As with the Romanian children, for a majority of the English children, the most salient marker of national identity was language. This seems consistent with findings from previous studies by Carrington and Short (1995), in which children claimed that language was one of the most tangible characteristics which sets aside distinctive groups of people in a national group (Penrose in Carrington and Short, 1995). National and regional identity is primarily expressed in language and, more specifically, in the accent the language is spoken. Language thus was the gateway to the various in-groups and as such it functioned on the basis of familiarity with and kinship to other members of the respective national group (Kellas, 1998).

To the question '**What makes a person English?**', most pupils responded that it was the language they spoke:

Michelle: Probably will say that it is somebody who will speak English and comes from England.

Keith: Like the Royal family. People like them, but not as high as them, not as posh.

LP: How can you tell if somebody is not English?

Michelle: It's their accent, the way they are speaking.

LP: How can somebody become English?

Michelle: Do what Madonna is doing, take elocution lessons. So she can speak the

Queen's English.

LP: How can you tell if somebody is English or not?

Jason: Cause they have a different accent, the English.

These responses illuminate the specific problem around the English linguistic space: the commonality of language between a great number of countries, and particularly in late modernity with the hegemony of the United States English, makes it difficult to have a clear-cut demarcation of the nation around one distinct language (see Anderson 1994; Gellner 1997; Smith 1999). An additional criteria of selection needs to be in place to capture a sense of difference; it is the 'accent' that appears to fulfil this function. Regional or social differences in any language are indicators of difference and can also function as markers of identity (Coupland et al., 2001).

There is a long history of theorists, from early work on the philosophy of language through sociolinguistics to late modernity media semiotics, that argue that language is central to building and maintaining a nation or an in-group. It may become a discourse about the nation during exchanges with 'others' and has a major role in the self-definition of individual members of that nation (Bhabha, 1986). It also alludes to the effects of discourse: strengthening the in-group and demonising 'others', the main function of nationalist discourses. At the same time such 'linguistic exchanges', Bourdieu (1994, p. 37) observes, are important because they indicate the presence of relations of power.

Both modernist and postmodernist scholars maintain that language conceptualised as discourse has the potential to operate as a political gatekeeper that regulates participation in or exclusion from public life (Habermas, 1992). A culture created around language can provide cohesion for the members of the dominant nation or social group, creating communication networks of equality or subordination for various social groups, and rejecting or marginalising individuals who are not able to participate in the network because of the language/cultural differentiation. As Bourdieu argues (1994, p. 48), the dominant culture belonging to the majority both unifies and separates, as it forces other cultures to be defined by their distance from the dominant culture.

In this sense, the local culture and language are seen as both separate and subordinate in relation to the larger network of dominant versions of English. Just as being English is primarily conditioned by speaking English, a Geordie is someone with an 'accent':

LP: So what really makes people English or Geordie?

Denise: Where they were brought up and whereabouts. Like if you were brought up in Newcastle, they would be used to the accents and that and the area around them.

Louise: Someone who's got an accent going, 'aye are you "al'rheet" pal or hinny?'

LP: So what's the difference between somebody who is Geordie and somebody who is English?

Denise: English is snobby and the language, isn't it?

LP: Do you speak Geordie?

Keith: Yes, but we don't do it with teachers.

LP: They don't like it?

Keith: No, we go to speak English.

LP: Are you ashamed of it?

Keith: No. The teachers want us to speak properly.

The normative discourse tends to displace 'deviant' or marginal discourses and despite the acceptance of some regional accents as fashionable or the presence on the BBC of reporters with strong regional accents, regional speech is still seen as something subordinate that has to be eradicated in the unifying process of nation building (Smith, 1999). This attitude towards the Geordie accent needs to be linked to the socio-economic status of the area and most of its inhabitants to fully understand the picture of domination/subordination by the centre towards a periphery, where the centre can be seen as London and the prosperous South of the country in relation to the less confident Northern regions. This undoubtedly has a powerful influence on the sense of self and identity among sectors of non-socially mobile working-class youth (Nayak, 2004). It is open to debate whether or not they take pride in their working class identity, but there is something strange about the insistence with which they emphasise that they are not speaking 'posh' English:

LP: How can you tell if somebody is a Geordie?

David: The way they talk. Geordies speak more slang.

Janice: They don't speak posh. Like in London. People here speak like this [exaggerated examples of the local accent].

LP: What's the difference between Geordie and Mackem?

Janice: Mackem is posher. Cause Newcastle is sort of Charver and Sunderland is like a posher.

It is quite a surprise to hear that anybody would call Sunderland 'posh', although the explanation could be that the language spoken in Sunderland might sound a bit closer to Standard English than the heavy Geordie accent used in Castlevew-on-Tyne.

It should be mentioned here that it was sometimes quite difficult to make out what the pupils were saying when they reverted to speaking with a strong accent. Invariably, the beginning of the interviews were spoken in English they would be expected to use in the classroom, but as soon as the conversation developed their register of speech would change, becoming more colloquial and I experienced a certain difficulty understanding what they were saying. This became a problem later when I was transcribing the tapes to the extent that I had to resort to help from 'native' Geordie speakers. The positive aspect to all this was that I interpreted the switch to a familiar language as a sign of becoming comfortable with the interviewing and thus obtaining probably more genuine responses to my questions.

3.6.3. Identity versus 'outsiders'

Generally, there was an awareness of the national and ethnic diversity of the population, although this has to be put into perspective as the proportion of the (non-white) minority ethnic communities in the North East is amongst the lowest in the UK (Nayak, 2004) and this is even smaller in a place like Castlevew-on-Tyne:

LP: Is everybody in this country English?

Carl: Not everyone. There are people from Pakistan, Africa, Italy, for the restaurants. China.

Sharon: Scottish, Welsh, Irish.

Louise: Like other nationalities. Not many. Got Chinese and Indian, but not loads and loads like in the West End of Newcastle.

It is interesting to note that there were no declarations of specifically dual identities or hyphenated ones. This probably can be accounted for by the absence of participants belonging to ethnic minorities as the research was carried out in a location with a fairly homogeneous character. The respondents could be seen as predominantly white, working class and for them identity was not necessarily a combination of various different ethnic and national layers, while other studies have encountered such dual or multiple identities, combining ethnic and national features (see Carrington and Short, 1995).

A significant marker of difference was language. This ensued, as indicated above, from the strong emphasis on language as a positive marker of the in-group. It also marked a powerful difference between those who were not English:

LP: How can you tell if somebody is English or is not English?

Jason: The way they speak. They speak slower. They talk quite slow and we talk faster. Like Australians, they've got a different accent.

Cheryl: Cause they have a different accent, the English.

Colin: The car's number plate.

This primary form of marking 'others' as different is consistent emphasis of belonging to a group, discussed above, that speaks the same language. As social or regional differences are marked by 'accent', not being English is also indicated by the specific accent of the speaker. It is interesting that Australians and Americans are also included in this group and seen as 'foreigners', despite the commonality of language.

However, language can be seen to be operating alongside other markers of difference:

Karen: Their accents, their looks, If they're from America or Hong Kong, you can tell what country they're from but if they're from somewhere really, really close just like the border of Scotland, then they're not.

LP: You said something about looks, how would you tell if someone doesn't look English?

Karen: They've got black hair or something, their colour, their accent, you can always tell if they're American because they always have that accent.

Rob: You can tell by the accents. You would if they are Chinese cause you could tell.

Jason: By their look. Chinese people cause their eyes are like that. They are more different, more rounded.

Louise: They have a darker skin colour. So you would know.

Laureen: If they are in a foreign county like different that come over. We're usually white. People in a hotter country, they come over and they're much darker than us.

LP: They wouldn't be English if they are dark.

Louise: It depends on where they were born. If their mum and dad were Chinese...

Laureen: Steven's dad was Chinese, but he was born in Hexham, I think. So he's English but he's Chinese sort of thing.

Louise: He's a half caste.

LP: So he's not a proper English.

Louise: No he's a Japan or something like that, but he doesn't speak Japanese.

Laureen: He just speaks like us but a tiny bit different.

This dialogue seems to illustrate how language is seen as an initial marker of difference, but later on, a racialised framework emerges. Difference was expressed in colour, in a traditional binary racist opposition of 'us white – them dark'. Racial stereotypes and racist vocabulary displaced the initial categories based on language and accent. The question that can be asked here is whether the children are simply operating with racialised, exclusivist notions of national identity, and whether they are operating with imagined or real difference. The discussion then centred on one of the few children in the school that is non-white. He is mistaken for being Chinese or Japanese based on a racialised perception, when he in fact is of Malaysian origin. His Englishness is seen as only partially valid as a 'half-caste', although he is readmitted to the group as he nearly speaks the same languages, only a 'tiny bit different'.

Such accounts were not frequent and it is debatable if significant conclusions can be drawn from it. To what extent is Englishness equated to being white? (Carrington and Short, 1998) and how exclusive is such a definition of the national group when immediately they come up with an example of a non-white peer who was nevertheless accepted as member of the group? Also, at no time during the interviews were any negative racial stereotypes displayed by any of the interviewees. Stereotyping and prejudice was a significant part of their attempts to make sense of the world

(Cullingford, 2000), but the negative comments were reserved for the Charvers and not for the non-white minorities.

This ambiguity was carried on further when I asked the question about the possibility of becoming English:

LP: How can anyone become English or Geordie?

Michelle: If they like blend in, if they from China and come here but they still spoke Chinese and they lived here most of their lives and they would eventually just become English

Rob: If they were born in a different country, it doesn't matter where like Spain or somewhere but they move to the likes of England and they were younger, they wouldn't be able to speak really, as a baby, they would be brought up in this language so.

LP: And what about the people who are from Pakistan or the Black people... are they English?

Rob: Some of them are, but they are not proper English.

LP: What if people came here from these countries some time ago and their children are born here. Are those children English?

Rob: Half English. Yes, half English. They are not 100% English.

LP: Have you all been born here?

Rob: Yes.

LP: And your parents?

Rob: Yes. My parents were born in Australia.

Michelle: My family is all from Ireland and Scotland.

LP: And you still see yourself as a Geordie?

Michelle: Yes, cause me, my mum and dad were born in England, only my parents' parents' parents were born in Ireland and Scotland.

Rob: You can't really be English if you are foreign. Not your way of life, is it?

This question goes further in exploring the accessibility of the national group as it tests out whether active inclusion is possible or whether national membership is seen as a natural, quasi-genetic given (Kellas, 1998). The same arguments and counter-arguments are rehearsed as before: the acquisition of language was seen as the major gateway to acceptance, but this is slightly ambiguous as it is not about competence in English, but assimilation into the native speakers' uniformity of accent-less English.

A more racialised terminology emerged here, too. Designations such as 'half-caste' or '100% English purity' indicate a racial system of representation if not one of a deliberately racist nature. It is interesting that the interviewee did not register a contradiction between this statement and the fact that his own parents were born in Australia or that his friends ancestors were Scottish and Irish. Such accounts indicate a closed, restricted vision of Englishness as circumscribed mainly by whiteness or Anglo-Saxon extraction, with language as a litmus test.

But equally there were also accounts suggesting a far more liberal approach to inclusion in the national group:

LP: Can anybody become English?

Mark: Yes.

LP: How can you become English?

Mark: If you learn the language. Live in England, have a house in England. Eat English food.

This more inclusive trend is reinforced by the responses to the questions that were inquiring about the images of Englishness, natural symbols or stereotypes. Most of the responses were fairly innocuous, none could be seen in any way aggressive or nationalistic. Sports seemed to embody the 'banal nationalism' invoked by Billig (1995) as a benign, though potentially ambivalent outlet for feelings of allegiance to nationhood. It is unclear whether the Queen was seen by the interviewees as a symbol of statehood or a figure of reference from the tabloid media pre-occupation with the Royal Family:

LP: What is the most English thing you can think about? If I say English, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

Simon: London.

Steven: A football team.

Sharon: Queen of England?

Kevin: Castles, I don't know, just history here, queens of England and that. Yeah, the Queen of England.

Cheryl: When Princess Diana died.

David: Rain. Cold weather. Football and rugby.

The questions 'What is the best/worst thing about this country?' generated fairly balanced responses along the same lines. The children acknowledged that they lived in a prosperous country, with a temperate climate – although as many saw the weather as a distinct disadvantage. Language came up again as a positive issue, however strange this seemed in this context. I believe this is more to do with the recognition of the difficulty

of learning a foreign language than the realisation of actually being able to speak their native language:

LP: Is it good to be English?

Tracey: Yes.

LP: Why?

Tracey: Because we got like big shops.

Keith: Because you know the language that you speak. You can speak English better than any other language.

Jimmy: It is not always hot compared to other countries, like Africa where it is always hot or Iceland where it is always cold.

Lisa: Every year we get loads of rain. It just doesn't go away, we are like proper flooded.

LP: What's the best thing about this country?

Dean: Doing what you want, really.

John: Living in a posh country.

LP: And what would be the worst thing?

Fiona: All the coldness, all the rain.

The above responses illustrate the complex nature British and English national identity, as there is no coherence in ascribing to themselves an identity that would be as straightforward as the one adopted by the children in the Romanian study. The historical complexity of the national identity in the British Isles has been exhaustively explored more recently by Colley (1992), while more contemporary aspects have been analysed by Kumar (2003), Billig (1995) and Delanty & O'Mahony (2002). They all agree on the contested nature of most attempted definitions of what British national identity is. There is a general emphasis on the hybridity or fluidity of national identity, with

greater and greater scope allowed for social and ethnic identity playing a significant role in the construction of local or national identity. understanding more about the interconnected nature of these aspects could be a more productive inquiry into the understanding of national identity, as Popoviciu and Mac an Ghaill (2004) say:

Questions of migration, nation-making and ethnic belonging are currently key elements of rapid social and cultural changes. However, contemporary British debates between anti-racists and cultural theorists are providing a limited discussion, with the former emphasising common experiences of racial inequality and the latter focusing upon the differentiated experiences of diverse diasporic communities. We need to explore how future studies of these communities in England, informed by the principle of ethnic inclusiveness, including the Anglo-ethnic majority, might help to move beyond the limits of dominant anti-racist positions in trying to understand the politics around ethnicity, racism and difference. A key question that arises here is whether we can develop a new civic nationalism for the 2000s that challenges the racist and nationalist exclusions currently experienced by diasporic groups, while addressing the fears of the Anglo-ethnic majority in a rapidly changing de-industrialising society (Wievorka, 1995). (p. 107)

One significant aspect of this identity is the emphasis that the children have put on being Geordie. Regionalism has always been a salient feature of this part of the United Kingdom, as Campbell (1993) points out. The geographical remoteness and isolation of the area from centre of the country, namely the South and London, has allowed scope for the preservation of a more traditional local culture, most perceptible in the local dialect. As in the past this identity was developed in relation to economic activities and

the changes it introduced to the local communities (the industrialisation during the 19th century transformed an agrarian rural society into a rural industrial and later urban industrial society, with the development of coal mining and ship building). Working class identity was a significant component in the regional identity, just as patterns of housing, education, religious affiliation played significant parts in it. Today a similar picture emerges, where social and economic changes are refashioning the regional identity, employment (or the lack of it) and consumption taking centre stage, as the economic cycles have created successive changes in the fabric of the region. Studies carried out by Tomaney and Ward (2001), Chatterton and Hollands (2001), Campbell (1993) analyse in depth the influence of the new economy on the everyday life in the region and on the implications this has on certain aspects of the local identity.

More recent events, such as the rejection in a referendum in 2004 of the establishment of a local assembly as a first step in introducing devolution in England, seems to point to the limits of the regionalism and regional identity. There seems to be no significant trend on the local political scene that would advocate a separate political framework for the region and the population also does not seem to be interested in a separatist agenda, whether political or cultural. One might draw the conclusion from this that the regional identity is comfortably subsumed to larger units of identity, such as Northern, English, or British.

3.7. *Critical reflections*

As stated above, the data gathered during the fieldwork in Castlevew-on-Tyne was much more amorphous than the data from Romania. However, the information obtained was more complex. The methodological shift to a more qualitative approach, with its emphasis on complex meanings allowed more interaction between myself and the interviewees and, consequently, the picture that emerged was more rounded. It is open to debate how much the sample was 'led on' by the PowerPoint presentation about Romania. I do not think it was, as very few of them made references during the interview to what they had seen and, and they did not use any of the symbols or concepts suggested by me when talking about Romania. Their interaction with me as a 'foreign' interviewer appeared most of the time to be fairly straightforward. Communication on occasions was difficult, as I could not understand the strong regional accent of a few of the interviewees. However, I decided not to interrupt the flow, hoping I would be able to understand what was being said when transcribing the tapes. Despite help from my Geordie friends, sometimes we were not able to understand what has been said, but I do not think that these omissions have had a significant impact on the overall understanding of the data.

The interview schedule, as set out above, was used flexibly. Some questions and sets of questions seemed to generate little data. 'What is the difference, say, between somebody who is British or English or Geordie?' had no significant responses that

would enable analysis, as most responses were at best evasive. This seems to be consistent with some previous research when children were unable to discriminate between British and English as categories of inclusion or identity. (Carrington and Short, 1998). Another question resulted in minimal responses and for some unexplained reason was considered embarrassing by the respondents: **'How could you explain to somebody foreign – like me, for instance – what an English person is?'** So after the first half of the interviews, I stopped asking it. For some questions with a high incidence of no responses, I tried to change and rephrase them and slightly change the context. For instance, **'What is the best / worst thing about being English?'** resulted in more responses when rephrased as **'What is the best / worst thing about being a Geordie / about Castlerview-on-Tyne?'** The locality seemed to have more immediate reality than an 'imagined community' extended to the whole nation (Anderson, 1994) which they found harder to imagine in the remoteness and isolation of the North East.

Some additional questions were introduced inquiring about the professional aspirations of the children. These questions proved to be useful as the career choices enumerated by the children could be seen as relevant to the discussion about regional identity and gender roles.

The analysis of the data presents some of the children's responses to illustrate the themes and motifs that emerged from the interview transcripts. Without being able to offer a rigorous presentation of the prevalence of each response, as was carried out with

the Romanian interviews, the analysis stopped short of presenting a more abundant and less structured description of the case study as might have emerged from a fully-fledged ethnography (Marcus, 1986). Nevertheless, a coherent, if complex picture emerges from this empirical research that allows a limited comparison with the findings from the Romanian fieldwork. What is clear from the above is that this was not the anticipated 'simple' comparison of groups of children discussing national identity that I envisaged when I began these case studies. In the literature review chapter, I explored the need to shift beyond the conceptual limitations of the black-white couplet. A main lesson for me in carrying out this theoretically informed, empirical study has been the need to move beyond a simplistic couplet of a Romanian regressive 'flag-waving' nationalism in contrast to a British benign, pluralist nationalism. On reflection, a major advantage of carrying out comparative, empirical work is that it enables you to problematise these simplistic solutions of universalising models of racial/national equality, shifting to a more nuanced picture that reflects social reality. The latter position involves an acknowledgement of the complexity of the multi-faceted phenomenon, national identity. It also has the potential to produce more productive policy initiatives around citizenship in both societies, appropriate to each culture's history by opening up the collective cultural memory to public investigation.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Introduction

This thesis has constituted a long journey for me. The impetus for the research topic was grounded in my own biography. From the outset, a constant feature that accompanied every phase was a reflexive process that put under scrutiny all aspects of the work. Theoretically, methodologically, ethically, and politically, key issues have been raised, suggesting a more complex social reality than I had anticipated when I set out my initial thoughts on the thesis. Such an approach constantly required a substantial effort not to slide into paralysing self-doubt or reach self-defeating dead-ends regarding various choices I had to make in the process. Reflexivity has contributed to an acceleration and deepening of the learning process, what might be referred to as the additional outcome of the research. Alongside this more academic move, at a personal level, I have come to question my standpoint on a range of issues. Hence, I now find a radical shift in many of my expectations with which I began the thesis and an accompanying transformation in my understanding of both questions and outcomes.

In retrospect, I began my PhD assuming that the questions were simple, while the political answers in the context of Eastern Europe were complex. Perhaps the most significant change is the realisation that both questions and answers are complex in all national contexts. My initial assumption of a Manichean dichotomy between a bellicose

nationalism in Romania and benign nationalism in the UK (Billig, 1995) clearly did not materialise in any concrete evidence and, consequently, my original intention of seeking to recommend a British-inspired model of national identity for educational purposes in Romania has proved rather naïve. I have come to question the need for any form of national identity constructed in an institutional context, although I still believe it is important to question deeply held beliefs and assumptions about one's national group. Furthermore, as indicated throughout earlier chapters, schools are central places to engage in this process. This research has made clear that there are no 'quick fixes' in relation to the question of developing and modernising a collective national narrative in conditions of late modernity (Colley, 2005). From my own perspective, I have come to understand the need to ground policy frameworks within the specific conditions of Romania and the UK. It is here that curriculum and pedagogical initiatives need to be underpinned by a diverse range of research and political debate.

2. Attempting a comparison

Throughout the thesis, I was constantly weighing up the pros and cons of actually presenting the findings in an explicit and contrastive comparative frame. As it became clear from the beginning, the terms of the comparison were different and the ensuing findings would be different, thus the validity of an explicit comparison could be questionable. The process of engaging with the comparison itself and the theoretical exploration of the various questions brought up by the two case studies, can be

regarded as the original contribution of the thesis. The fine-tuning of the methodology and data collection methods, the epistemological position, the policy explorations and recommendations, as well as locating the theoretical framework for understanding how children conceptualise national identity, are all areas that have contributed to fulfilling the preconditions that could establish the validity of this piece of research.

A summary of the findings from the data collection and analysis could be, nevertheless, useful at this stage. The Romanian children have used a number of highly explicit concepts relating to national identity that have been appropriated from official propagandistic discourses. They constructed the national in-group as closed and fairly rigid, based on strict biological and cultural determinism. The image of themselves was mostly positive and they have repeated the clichés of the official propaganda when defining certain characteristics of their nation. The research at this point has uncovered that they possess a large and sophisticated vocabulary to *talk* about these issues, but it is not clear, due to the nature of the data collection, to what extent these conceptualisations are actually endowed with *meaning*. It also became clear that they have negative attitudes towards various out-groups, ranging from mild hostility to strong racism in the case of the Roma.

The analysis of the data collected in England revealed that children here do not possess the same rich vocabulary regarding national identity as the children in Romania. The level of conceptualisation of nationhood is not influenced by omnipresent nationalist

discourses, and consequently can evolve in a richer, more authentic tapestry of various identities that children bring together when defining their in-group. For these children, there is a strong emphasis in their identity on regional, social and economic factors, as they emphasise the importance of being Geordies, speaking with a local accent, coming from a working-class background and displaying characteristic patterns of consumption and leisure that reflect present day economic realities in this region. They rarely articulate racist views regarding ethnic minorities, although there is a strong process of racialisation of the local underclass, the Charvers.

There are, in my opinion, two straightforward factors that could account for the above differences. First, the two countries are at different stages of development of their national identities. As discussed above in the Literature Review, Romania combines a position typical of early modernity, characterised by efforts of nation-building, with conditions of late modernity, imposed by recent political changes, globalisation and EU integration. On the other hand, the United Kingdom is clearly positioned in this same late modernity, with fluid and complex forms of identity, where national identity is one of the many contextualised forms of individual and group identity. The second reason that can account for differences in children's responses is that in the United Kingdom there have been numerous policy initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive and anti-discriminatory environment in schools, based on political initiatives informed by anti-racism and multiculturalism. As detailed in previous chapters, academic research has focused for decades on issues of inequality of race and social exclusion, and the

findings have informed policy and practice in education. Romania did not have such initiatives and social research has only recently started to explore the field of inequality, while an old-fashioned historiography maintained a discourse of nation building typified by earlier periods of pre-modern history.

3. (Re)searching for a Methodological Position

I began the thesis with a clearly proposed outcome of developing a theory about how national identity is being built within the context of secondary education in two different societies. As a theory can be seen as a set of concepts used to define, describe, and suggest possible explanations for some phenomenon or activity, my purpose was to explain the mechanisms through which the Romanian educational system produces a 'flag-waving' nationalism, while English schools seem to engender a self-consciousness around it. Fully aware of the limitations of theory building around a limited number of findings, I attempted to build a model which eventually might help explain what was occurring in this process. As Walford (2001, p. 14) suggests: 'models are essentially simplifications of complex realities. By focusing on one particular aspect of the complexity, within strict time and space constraints, it is possible to construct a way of looking at that aspect which allows a story to be told'. I hoped that such a model would be helpful in overcoming the inherent limitations of the attempts to generalise findings from small-scale research beyond the case itself. Throughout the early phase of the data

collecting, given I was involved in a comparative research, I was pre-occupied with the issue of generalisation.

At this stage, much qualitative research seemed to be over-concerned with the *particular* as well as being rather disjointed. I had not yet come to the recognition of 'the particular social processes and practices and the specific sets of causal relations that exist within them....(so that) such research can be relevant to a much wider audience without succumbing to the misconceived need to generalise' (Connolly, 1998, p. 123). I shifted to a position that although not claiming a generalisability, maintains that in-depth analysis generated within the *particular* case-studies carried out in Romania and the UK, as part of a wider research community, produces useful data of a complex picture of multiple realities. Future empirical work may continue to contribute to building cumulative knowledge that focuses on the interweaving of complex social processes and cultural identities that researchers, policy-makers and practitioners may employ as a resource for engaging with questions of social and cultural change.

In order to arrive at this position, my methodological approach needed to move to a critical perspective, which problematised the 'making' and 'taking' of research questions (Lather, 1991). Operating within an overall methodological paradigm, with its emphasis on cultural context, meanings, and understandings, I found it useful to deploy both qualitative and quantitative methods. This enabled me to develop a productive tension in carrying out empirical research of combining the inferring of meanings by

understanding the context, with specific quantitative strengths in terms of precision, rigour, verifiability, and replicability (Bryman and Crammer, 1994). Central to this development was coming to understand the productivity of recognising the relative autonomy of methodology from theoretical and substantive issues. More specifically, I was directed towards the epistemological status of the interviewed children's perspectives, which raised a number of complexities for my comparative fieldwork, emphasising the significant differences between the two nationally based samples. These included: the differential access to a vocabulary to talk about national identity, and an increasing awareness on my part that *national identity*, as a single category, was not sufficient to capture the children's sense of their 'national selves' but rather involved interconnecting identity positions, spoken through language, regionalism, gender, and consumerism. A further major difference, with methodological implications for a comparative study was in relation to policy development around issues of national identity, cultural difference, and modern citizenship. In England, discussion of national identity is relatively limited compared to the wide range of materials about national identity available in Romania.

In short, methodology was highly productive in developing a critical location from which I could reflexively engage with a comparative study of national identity formation among children in Romania and the United Kingdom (Hantrais and Mangen, 1996). The latter operating within late-modernity conditions has had a more profound and intense exposure to such cultural phenomena as multiculturalism, anti-racism and

the multiplicity of interconnecting social categories, such as class and gender alongside questions of globalisation, consumption and regionalism (Brah et al., 1999a). Hence, I began to rethink my thesis in terms of how the UK's attempted solutions to solving the ensuing issues might become a source for helping to reform curriculum policy in Romania, that would incorporate a modernised mode of citizenship underpinned by a critical multi-culturalism (May, 1999). Most importantly, this brought me back to explicitly engage with critical theory and its promise to open up research, in a move away from a positivist search for universal truths to be applied in diverse national contexts, with which I began my study, to a need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the conceptual and political importance of the impact of historical contexts, social meanings and diverse knowledges in which individual and collective subjects make sense of questions of national identity and how we live with difference.

Future research needs to engage with a wider selection of sites, reflecting the varied socio-economic and cultural conditions in both societies. I carried out the data collection in a predominantly 'white area' of England, while the children in Romania came from a region where several nationalities live together. It would be interesting to compare the outcome of further research in, say multi-ethnic Birmingham or cosmopolitan London, or in the predominantly Romanian provinces of Moldova or Walachia or the Hungarian enclave of Szeklerland. My examination of aspects of educational policy in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, suggests that carrying out research in these locations would encounter a much more articulate expression of national identity amongst

children and the perception of difference would be experienced within distinct parameters. In addition, I could envisage conducting similar research in Hungary, where conditions have radically changed in the last few years with the increase of material prosperity because of EU membership, alongside the new challenge of the arrival of recent migrants, adding to the pervasive racism in relation to anti-Gypsy discrimination and the enduring anti-Semitism.

Reflecting on the limitations of the present methodology and data collection methods, there are two options that might be considered in future research: expanding the size of the sample and thus utilising a more quantitative research methodology, based on questionnaires analysed with specific software or a different qualitative approach, for example, an in-depth ethnography carried out in a longer time frame. Both approaches would generate data with different claims of validity, as well as different insights into how children conceptualise national identity. The ethnographic method would also allow a greater insight into the interior geography of schools (Gordon et al., 2000) including the physical and social structure of the sites of the data collection amongst the research subjects. On a number of occasions during the time spent in the schools, I felt that it would be productive to engage with the teachers' accounts, thus including them in producing a more complex research process. Largely, my prejudice against the Romanian education system reinforced the assumption that the Romanian teachers would not truthfully answer questions about national identity, but automatically repeat an official line with which they were inoculated through decades of propaganda,

irrespective of whether they believed it or not. The educational reform now introduced within Romania has gained momentum under the auspices of the imminent EU membership and new generations of teachers are starting work in schools across the country. It would be presumptuous of me to continue with the same degree of scepticism regarding their commitment to the official line on national identity, which itself may be in the process of changing.

A further important point with regard to interviewing children: I have tended to work within a sociological framework in carrying out my case studies. However, I believe that alongside this, it would be productive to engage with aspects of developmental psychology, notably with the work of Piaget, in order to gain a better understanding of the cognitive development of children and their ability to comprehend and verbalise such abstract ideas as national identity. Also, as indicated in the work of Cullingford, (2000), social psychology could offer valuable insights into the mechanisms of group-identity formation, the creation of prejudice and how to overcome it. In turn, this might have led to the improvement of the interview schedule itself in my own case studies.

4. (Re)searching for a comparative theoretical frame

As indicated above, I began this research project with the primary aim of exploring how a British response to national identity might provide a model for the development of a more progressive curriculum approach within Romania. In carrying out my empirical

work in Romanian and UK schools, I became aware of the serious limitations of assuming a common framework to understand nation making among pupils. In reading the academic literature on the nation, I gained a more conceptually sophisticated explanation of why this was the case in relation to different geographies and different histories.

From a comparative perspective, during the last few decades, the most productive field of research in Britain concerning issues of identity and inclusion/exclusion in education has focused not on 'nation', but on the exploration of 'race, ethnicity, and racism'. Engaging with this literature seemed to be a productive way forward, while at the same time I was hoping that I might find subsumed issues of national identity within it. It also seemed a necessary first step forward in understanding the state of play of current debates on education, citizenship, and identity within the UK. In order to be able to engage with the current debate, it was necessary to understand the history over the last forty years of British academic and political representations of race, racism, and ethnicity. A brief account illustrates that, an early reformist race relations position was established that addressed questions of inter-ethnic relations, under-written by a belief in creating a multi-cultural society (Patterson, 1963; Banton, 1977). This liberal perspective was contested by Weberian and Marxist theorists, who adopted a radical class position, pointing out that a major flaw in the race-relations approach was the latter's failure to address issues of structural inequality and more specifically the wide-

range institutional racist practices that black people experienced in British society (Rex and Moore, 1967; CCCS, 1982; Miles, 1982).

From a comparative perspective, the absence of theoretical work in Romania is in direct contrast to the grounding of British anti-racist and multicultural interventions in these class-based theories. Most particularly, these perspectives have been important in identifying questions of structural power, while at the same time, alongside other new social movement political projects, such as feminism and gay/lesbian liberation, providing a vocabulary that enabled the mobilisation of minority ethnic groups to politically challenge their shared subordinated position in British society (Mirza, 1997). Although, western accounts of class cannot simply be applied to contemporary Romanian society, nevertheless, I suggest that the paucity of theoretical understandings of racism remains a serious barrier to its modernisation, in terms of racial equality, for example, in relation to the experiences of the Roma population. More concretely, Rex's definition of a 'racialised underclass' could be productive in explaining the social subordination and cultural marginalization of the Roma, which the Romanian children in the above case study had difficulty in discussing. Equally important such a theoretical underpinning might help to develop the concept of critical multiculturalism, as it has in the UK.

The suggestion of Romania learning from class-based analyses of racial inequality may appear strange, at a time when within a British context, they tend to have been erased or

at least down-graded. However, more recently, some scholars have argued for the need to revisit earlier structural explanations and to rework them within the context of contemporary cultural theories about subjectivity, culture and diversity (Brah et al., 1999a). It is suggested that cultural theories of difference could productively be fused with the analytical frameworks that focus upon state power, institutional life, and collective social change. In so doing, such an approach with a sensitivity to socio-historical understandings of the impact of racial discrimination on key public institutions of employment, housing and schooling would be able to develop a more comprehensive account that would make sense to a younger generation who have shifted from a class based (industrial) society to a multi-stratified consumer based risk society (Giddens, 1991). Most significantly, in relation to Romania and the UK a reworking of earlier theories of the interconnections between class and race within a contemporary framework of multiple social exclusions including gender, nation, religion *et cetera*, might help generate a more optimistic political vision. This is important at a time when the global appears to be overly determining what people feel they can achieve at a local level, in terms of building a more equal society marked by the elimination of social divisions, national/ethnic exclusions and cultural marginalisations (Bradley, 1996; Savage, 2000).

More recently, as part of a wider theoretical shift, that of the 'cultural turn', class-based accounts have been accused of being overly reductionist in emphasising the determining power of political economy, thus underplaying issues of culture and subjectivity. The

latter perspective has been developed by the new politics of cultural difference, arguing for a more nuanced approach, focussing upon a radical diversity and openness with reference to racial, ethnic, and national boundaries (Rattansi and Westwood, 1994; Guillaumin, 1995). While this more recent cultural theory defines itself against earlier structuralist accounts, my empirically-based study of national identity formation makes clear a major shared limitation of 'old' social and 'new' cultural accounts. This thesis provides a necessary critique of the generalized claims of structuralist and post-structuralist analytical frameworks that fail to engage in critical empirical studies, that would serve as a necessary testing of macro-theories that operate at a high level of abstraction. More specifically, in relation to late modernity and post-structuralist theories, there is an increasing serious disengagement from the empirical world. This thesis illustrates the advantage of embedding studies of the development of national, ethnic and racialised identities within specific institutions, such as schools; thus acknowledging the 'messiness' and unevenness of how people makes sense of their lives, most specifically, in relation to living with difference.

The comparative analysis also enabled me to interrogate the limits of British theoretical frameworks. With reference to future research, it would be of mutual benefit to the repositioning of these theoretical frameworks in the UK, but also in Romania, as we need to locate comparative research within recent social and cultural transformations. This has involved global economic restructuring, advanced technological communications and increasing cultural exchange, that have highlighted multiple

processes of social exclusion and cultural marginalisation that, in turn, have challenged older models of racial, national, and ethnic inequality. At the same time, a comparative analysis serves to illustrate the limitations of much British theorising about race and racism, which is over-dependent on American analytical frameworks, while underplaying the potential productiveness of European work that places notions of the nation and national belonging at the centre of an attempt to understand the complex social and psychological processes accompanying the changing forms of current racialised, national and ethnic identity formations (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991; Webber, 1991; Silverman, 1992).

More specifically, comparative analysis suggests that future research in this area might productively address a number of issues that have emerged across Eastern and Western Europe that are of specific political importance. These include: the prevalence of Euro-racism, the intensification of Islamophobia, particularly post September 11th, and the arrival, regulation and dispersal of new migrants, 'illegal' immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, alongside the diverse range of contemporary national and ethnic minority community mobilisations and struggles. The re-emergence of the far right and neo-fascist parties in Eastern and Western Europe, with the accompanying increased physical and symbolic violence against migrant and Jewish communities, and the wider dimensions of a rapidly changing world of ethnic nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms in Europe and beyond, appears to have surprised political commentators (Alund and Schierup, 1991). By the end of the last decade, significant

theoretical frameworks and accompanying empirical work attempted to trace developments of racism within individual European nation states (Ford, 1992; Wieviorka, 1991). However, this work provides a limited perspective on the rapid and widespread rise of Euro-racism and further inquiries are urgently needed (Willems, 1995). Currently, within Britain in 2005, these racialised discourses of derision and exclusion have been extended. For example, it is a main tabloid newspaper topic and a major issue projected by the Conservative Party in seeking to be re-elected as government, that appears to be resonating with a significant minority of the British population, echoing polling results from across Eastern Europe over the last few years. Currently, within a British context, it has been independently established as a social fact that the number of asylum seekers entering Britain has plummeted, yet the Conservatives' main electoral success appears to be their claim that numbers are ever-increasing (Toynbee, 2005).

Future research needs to explore for explanations for the phenomenon of Euro-racism. From the perspective of this thesis two significant explanations have been produced by Miles and Wieviorka. Miles's (1993) argument is salient in claiming that the new comparative interest in contemporary European racisms was an important analytical development in the late 1980s, which for him was a consequence of the descendancy of the race relations approach, as examined in the literature chapter. He is one of the most important Marxist contributors to theories of racism. Writing from this position, he suggests that the concept of Euro-racism indicates an intensification of nationalisms

which he claims is associated with the crisis in the nation state in the latest stage of globalisation. In contrast to Miles, for whom racism is conceptualised as integral to the development of late capitalist societies, Wieviorka (1991, 1995) locates his writing within analytical frameworks that place modernity and post-industrialism at the centre of the explanation of the rise of contemporary European racisms. He identifies four modes of racism situated within modern social and political conditions: first, a universalist type, evident in conditions of colonial expansion which inferiorises 'pre-modern others' as the 'uncivilised'; second, a racism associated with down-ward social mobility – a 'poor white' response common at times of socio-economic recession and unemployment in modern industrial societies – often politically exploited by extreme right political parties; third, an anti-modernist culturalist stance, that appeals to traditions of nation, religion and community, frequently targeting the Jews (historically and presently) and more recently, economically successful Asians; and finally intergroup tensions that have developed a complex set of social relations within the conditions of modernity. Wieviorka traces the commonalities of the current effects of the huge socio-economic and cultural transformations impacting upon European societies.

A major feature of Euro-racism has been increased levels of state surveillance and exclusion alongside an upsurge in popular violence against Muslims (Hargreaves 1995; Silverman, 1992; Hoogvelt, 1997). A range of reasons have been identified for the intensification of the racialisation of Islam, including: that in many European societies Muslims form the largest non-European minority; that following the collapse of

communism, Europe is returning to an earlier historical conflict between Christians and Muslims; that the early 1970s world recession was associated with 'greedy oil sheikhs' (Mason, 1995). More recently, the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Gulf war have been represented as a direct challenge to Western, and more specifically, North American hegemony. Most significantly, the September 11th attack on the United States is currently projected by the political right as illustrative of the major threat of religious fundamentalists against liberal social democratic Western societies – a 'clash of civilisations'. The political Left in Western Europe, as modern secular liberals, often appear confused about how to respond to and defend social groups mobilizing around the defence of religious rights.

A further example of emerging contemporary forms of social exclusions within the context of global transformations is illustrated by the growing significance of new migrants, 'illegal' immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Equally significant is the social positioning of Gypsies and Travellers in Britain, who are currently receiving much negative media attention. There is a long history of neglect, both by the state and anti-racist movements, of the material and cultural experiences and needs of Gypsies and Travellers. As indicated throughout this thesis, there is much work to be carried out, both to make sense of the social positioning of the Roma in Romania, and how we might overcome the extreme social marginalisation and cultural racialisation that they experience.

Within the UK and Romania, in response to the development of contemporary forms of social exclusions, a diverse range of contemporary national, ethnic and religious minority community mobilisations and struggles have emerged. An historical account of the sociology of nation serves to link these current political mobilisations to their histories of protest in colonial and post-colonial conditions. More recently, there has been a move beyond images of a unitary history, to recording the fragmentation of national, ethnic and racialised identities and the under reported forms of resistance to ethnic and national exclusion that are not reducible to academic accounts of anti-racist movements (Gilroy, 1993; Knowles and Mercer, 1992). Further work is urgently needed in this field of inquiry both to recover the forgotten histories of invisible minorities and contemporary mobilisations across Eastern and Western societies.

5. (Re)searching educational policy and curriculum practices: critical multi-culturalism

Following the introduction of Citizenship Education in both countries, there is a need to evaluate its development. Of particular importance for exploration may be, among other aspects, how we deal with identity, diversity, and difference. As in my own study, I feel that it is essential to place pupils' meanings at the centre of future research and evaluation of what remains in many countries a controversial curriculum issue. In attempting to understand more comprehensively the conceptualisation of national identity, it could be beneficial to examine the concepts that are made available to pupils

in different areas of the school, such as: the teaching of English/Romanian/Hungarian, in the selection of the canon for the literature classes, the teaching of History and Geography, as well as the content of the textbooks used for these subjects. Alongside this exploration of the formal curriculum, there is a need to evaluate fully the impact of the hidden curriculum, including, for example, the impact of everyday institutional symbolic symbols and peer group networks, alongside the 'views beyond the school gate' (Connolly, 1994).

The findings of a recent study commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation examines the effectiveness of current initiatives directed towards reducing prejudice and intolerance amongst children and young people. The study confirms a major aspect that emerged in my empirical work with children in the North East of England, that of the difficulty of Anglo(ethnic) majority pupils expressing coherently a national identity due to not having access to concepts or language. The Rowntree study argues that:

Young people had a poor sense of their own identity but a strong grasp of which different groups lived in their town. Some young people struggled to describe their racial identity without multiple-choice options or prompts. Many found it one of the hardest questions on the questionnaire. Many respondents replied with comments like 'tall' or 'fat' or 'blond hair, brown eyes', for example. In some instances, descriptions were precise and individual, unrelated to conventional adult group identities, for example, 'Newcastle-under-Lyme', 'quarter Scottish'. (Lemos, 2005, p.9)

This empirically-based study reports what is a major issue of concern: many of the anti-racist or multicultural initiatives that have been evaluated have shown clear limitations in achieving their aims. For example, many of the young people taking part in the initiatives did not show signs of change in racist or intolerant attitudes. In order to enhance the effectiveness of such programmes, Lemos suggests, among other social practices, a focus on debating local issues with a specific emphasis on 'strengthening everyone's sense of identity':

Activities designed to explore and understand difference are not just in order to increase understanding of other people. They should also help young people to understand themselves better and thereby strengthen their own sense of identity. Talking about myself might reveal to me how little I know about myself and my own heritage and that I might benefit from finding out more, for myself as well as in order to discuss questions of identity with others. That does, of course, require young people from majority communities to give up the space marked 'normal'. Thinking of oneself as normal and everyone else as different is not a stimulus to curiosity, much less learning. (Lemos, 2005, p.57).

This resonates with new cultural theories discussed in the literature chapter, concerning the need to open up the concept of ethnicity that is inclusive of the (Anglo)ethnic majority. This move away from the notion that only minorities have an ethnicity to one in which multiple ethnicities are central could be located within a critical multi-cultural approach.

At the same time, understanding one's own identity can be productive only within an appropriate frame of reference, that is, when the model adopted by the wider society allows the plurality of identities to flourish within a coherent and cohesive system of identity. Brown (2000) advocates the concept of 'multicultural nationalism' (p.126) as a relatively new development; in terms of an organic development of modern states confronted with diverse populations. He suggests a classification of civic, ethnocultural and multicultural nationalisms as the available panoply of choices for contemporary states. According to him, civic nationalism offers a vision of a community of equal citizens; ethnocultural nationalism offers a vision of a community united by a belief in common ancestry and ethnocultural sameness; and multicultural nationalism offers a vision of a community which respects and promotes the cultural autonomy and status equality of its component ethnic groups (p.126). The vision of multicultural nationalism needs further elaboration, as it presents difficulties, especially concerning the relationship between ethnic majorities and minorities and the expression of identity, group affiliation and the allocation of resources between them. Traditionally, multicultural policies have been largely concerned with the status of ethnic minorities, who have been seen as 'politically, economically and culturally marginalised' (p.132) and as such, these policies were aimed at redressing such injustices by 'reallocation of power and resources, so that by rectifying the economic and status disadvantage of members of ethnocultural minority groups, the cohesion and vibrancy of these communities can be preserved or restored' (p.132). But this has led to a narrowing of vision as regarding the status of majority communities, as Brown (2000) argues:

The designation of members of ethnic minorities as the disadvantage sometimes leads proponents of multiculturalism to minimise or ignore the existence of disadvantage within the ethnocultural majority. Majority communities are sometimes marginalised by being depicted as having no strong ethnic attachment, or portrayed as the ethnic community whose previous dominance must now be compensated for by their new subordination. The question arises, then, as to how multiculturalism deals with the fact that recent widespread increases in economic (class) disparities in many countries, frequently cross rather than coincide with ethnocultural lines, so that there are significant numbers of disadvantaged individuals within ethnic majority communities, who might see themselves as excluded from the social justice vision offered by multiculturalism, and who might therefore understandably react against it (ibid. p.132).

Engaging with these considerations in terms of identity formation – national, ethnic or religious – in relation to majority and minority communities in organic interdependence may lead to productive insights into how a vision of multicultural nationalism may offer an innovative response to the problems with which contemporary states are confronted.

I hope that the above serves to illustrate the methodological and policy value of comparative dimension been built into future research. In relation to my own case studies, as indicated earlier, it might be productive in further work to increase the size of the samples and add further sites for investigation. Comparisons between various European societies should maintain their topicality over the next decade as a more accelerated EU integration process brings together societies, who are at different stages of socio-economic, cultural, and political development. Within this context, it may be

suggested that the need for critical engagement with questions of national identity and how we live with difference will also be a major feature of the future. Most saliently, critically exploring educational policy and practice across societies with different historical backgrounds, but confronted with similar problems in contemporary Europe (new migrations, emerging ethnicities, national exclusions, Islamophobia *et cetera*), may be a highly productive arena for comparative research in the development of national identities.

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